t 11806 a 48

ESSAYS

ON

RHETORIC:

ABRIDGED CHIEFLY FROM

(Hugh)

DR. BLAIR's LECTURES

ON THAT

SCIENCE.

THE THIRD EDITION,

WITH

ADDITIONS and IMPROVEMENTS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. MURRAY, N° 32, FLEET-STREET.

M DCC LXXXVII.

1787

BIRMINGHAM
DISCARDED
BOOK
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

B51a

BRITISH MUSEUM
11 OCT 82

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE want of a ſyſtem of Rhetoric upon a conciſe plan, and at an eaſy price, will, it is preſumed, render this little Volume not unacceptable to the Public. To collect knowledge, which is ſcattered over a wide extent, into a ſmall compaſs; if it has not the merit of originality, has at leaſt the advantage of being uſeful. Many who are terrified at the idea of travelling over a ponderous volume in ſearch of information, will yet ſet out on a ſhort journey, in purſuit of ſcience, with alacrity and profit. Thoſe for whom the following Eſſays are principally intended, will derive a peculiar benefit from the brevity with which they are conveyed. To youth, who

are engaged in the rudiments of learning, and whoſe time and attention muſt be occupied with a variety of ſubjects, every branch of ſcience ſhould be rendered as conciſe as poſſible. Hence the attention is not fatigued, nor the memory overloaded.

That a knowledge of Rhetoric forms a very material part of the education of a polite ſcholar, muſt be univerſally allowed. Any attempt, therefore, however imperfect, to make ſo uſeful a ſcience more generally known, has a claim to that praiſe which is the reward of a good intention. With this the Editor will be ſufficiently ſatisfied; ſince being ſerviceable to others, is the moſt agreeable method of becoming contented with ourſelves.

CON-

CONTENTS.

Page

INTRODUCTION

On Taſte - - - 1

Criticiſm---Genius---Pleaſures of Taſte---

Sublimity in Objects - - 8

Sublimity in Writing - - 21

Beauty, and other Pleaſures of Taſte 34

Origin and Progreſs of Language - 46

Riſe and Progreſs of Language and of Writing 59

Structure of Language - - 68

Structure of Language. Engliſh Tongue 76

Style---Perſpicuity and Preciſion - 88

Structure of Sentences - - 95

The ſame ſubject - - - 104

Structure of Language. Harmony - 114

Origin and Nature of Figurative Language 124

Metaphor - - - 132

Hyperbole---Perſonification---Apoſtrophe 141

Page

Perſonification - - - 144

Apoſtrophe - - - 150

Compariſon, Antitheſis, Interrogation, Exclamation, and other Figures of Speech 151

Antitheſis - - - 157

Interrogation and Exclamation - 159

Viſion - - - - 161

Climax - - - - 162

General Characters of Style---diffuſe; conciſe; feeble; nervous; dry; plain; neat; elegant; flowery - 164

Style---ſimple; affected; vehement---Directions for forming a proper Style - 174

Critical Examination of Mr Addiſon's Style in No. 411 of the Spectator - 185

Eloquence. Origin of Eloquence; Grecian Eloquence; Demoſthenes - 200

Roman Eloquence---Cicero. Modern Eloquence 209

Eloquence of Popular Aſſemblies - 218

Eloquence of the Bar - - 224

Eloquence of the Pulpit - - 233

Conduct of a Diſcourſe in all its Parts--Introduction--Diviſion--Narration and Explication - - - 241

The

Page

The Argumentative Part of a Diſcourſe--the Pathetic Part---the Peroration - 252
Pronunciation or Delivery - - 260
Means of improving in Eloquence - 275
Comparative Merit of the Antients and the Moderns - - - 286
Hiſtorical Writing - - 291
Philoſophical Writing - - 298
Epiſtolary Writing - - 300
Fictitious Hiſtory - - - 301
Nature of Poetry. Its Origin and Progreſs;
Verſification - - - 304
Engliſh Verſification - - 307
Paſtoral Poetry - - - 311
Lyric Poetry - - - 319
Didactic Poetry - - - 322
Deſcriptive Poetry - - - 327
The Poetry of the Hebrews - 333
Epic Poetry - - - 339
Homer's Iliad and Odyſſey - - 346
The Æneid of Virgil - - 352
Lucan's Pharſalia - - 356
Taſſo's Jeruſalem - - - 359
The Luſiad of Camoens - - 362

The

	Page
The Telemachus of Fenelon - -	365
The Henriade of Voltaire - -	368
Milton's Paradiſe Loſt - -	371
Dramatic Poetry. Tragedy -	376
Greek Tragedy - - -	394
French Tragedy - - -	397
Engliſh Tragedy - - -	400
Comedy - - - -	404
Antient Comedy - - -	409
Spaniſh Comedy - - -	412
French Comedy - - -	413
Engliſh Comedy - - -	415

BRITISH MUSEUM
11 52
OCT

INTRO-

INTRODUCTION.

A PROPER acquaintance with the circle of Liberal Arts is requiſite to the ſtudy of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. To extend their knowledge muſt be the firſt care of thoſe who wiſh either to write with reputation, or to expreſs themſelves in public ſo as to command attention. Among the antients it was an eſſential principle, that the orator ought to be converſant in every department of learning. No art, indeed, can be contrived, which could ſtamp merit on a compoſition for richneſs or ſplendour of expreſſion, when it poſſeſſes barren or erroneous ſentiments. Oratory, it is true, has often been diſgraced by attempts to eſtabliſh a falſe criterion of its value. Writers have endeavoured to ſupply the want of matter by the graces of compoſition; and to court the temporary applauſe of the ignorant, inſtead of the laſting approbation of the diſcerning. But

the

the prevalence of ſuch impoſture muſt be ſhort and tranſitory. The body and ſubſtance of any valuable compoſition muſt be formed by knowledge and ſcience. Rhetoric completes the ſtructure, and adds the poliſh; but firm and ſolid bodies alone are able to receive it.

Among the learned it has long been a conteſted, and remains ſtill an undecided queſtion, whether Nature or Art contributes moſt towards excellence in writing and diſcourſe. Various may be the opinions, with reſpect to the manner in which Art can moſt effectually furniſh her aid for ſuch a purpoſe; and it were preſumption to advance, that mere rhetorical rules, how juſt ſoever, are ſufficient to form an orator. Private application and ſtudy, ſuppoſing natural genius to be favourable, are certainly ſuperior to any ſyſtem of public inſtruction. But, though rules and inſtructions cannot comprehend every thing which is requiſite, they may afford conſiderable uſe and advantage. If they cannot inſpire genius, they can give it direction

and

and assistance. If they cannot make barrenness fruitful, they can correct redundancy. They discover the proper models for imitation: they point out the principal beauties which ought to be studied, and the chief faults which ought to be avoided; and consequently tend to enlighten Taste, and to conduct Genius from unnatural deviations, into its proper channel. Though they are incapable, perhaps, of producing great excellencies, they may at least be subservient, to prevent the commission of considerable mistakes.

In the education of youth, no object has appeared more important to wise men, in every age, than to furnish them early with a relish for the entertainments of Taste. From these, to the discharge of the higher and more important duties of life, the transition is natural and easy. Of those minds which have this elegant and liberal turn, the most pleasing hopes may be entertained. It affords the promise of many virtues. On the contrary, an entire insensibility of eloquence, poetry, or any of the

fine

fine arts, may juſtly be conſidered as a perverſe ſymptom of youth; and ſuppoſes them inclined to inferior gratifications, or capable of being engaged only in the more common and mechanical purſuits of life.

The improvement of Taſte ſeems to be more or leſs connected with every good and virtuous diſpoſition. By giving frequent exerciſe to all the tender and humane paſſions, a cultivated taſte increaſes ſenſibility; yet, at the ſame time, it tends to ſoften the more violent and angry emotions.

Ingenuas didiciſſe fideliter artes,
Emollit mores nec ſinit eſſe feros.

Theſe poliſh'd arts have humaniz'd mankind,
Soften'd the rude, and calm'd the boiſt'rous mind.

Poetry, Eloquence, and Hiſtory, are continually holding forward to our view thoſe elevated ſentiments and high examples which tend to nouriſh in our minds public ſpirit, the love of glory, contempt of external fortune, and the admiration of every thing that is truly great, noble, and illuſtrious.

ON

TASTE.

TASTE is "the power of receiving "pleaſure and pain from the beauties "and deformities of Nature and of Art." It is a faculty common in ſome degree to all mankind. Throughout the circle of human nature nothing is more univerſal than the reliſh of Beauty, of one kind or other; of what is orderly, proportioned, grand, harmonious, new, or ſprightly. Nor does there prevail leſs generally a diſreliſh of whatever is groſs, diſproportioned, diſorderly, and diſcordant. In children the rudiments of Taſte appear very early, in a thouſand inſtances; in their partiality for regular bodies, their fondneſs for pictures and ſtatues, and their warm attachment to whatever is new or aſtoniſhing. The moſt ſtupid peaſants receive plea-

ſure from tales and ballads, and are delighted with the beautiful appearances of nature, in the earth, and the heavens. Even in the wild deſarts of America, where human nature appears in its ſtate of greateſt nakedneſs, the Savages have yet their ornaments of dreſs, their war and their death ſongs, their harangues and their orators. The principles of Taſte muſt, therefore, be deeply founded in the human mind. To have ſome diſcernment of Beauty, is no leſs eſſential to man, than to poſſeſs the attributes of ſpeech and of reaſon.

Though no human being can be entirely devoid of this faculty, yet it is poſſeſſed in very different degrees. In ſome men only the faint glimmerings of Taſte are viſible; the beauties which they reliſh are of the coarſeſt kind; and of theſe they have only a weak and confuſed impreſſion: while in others, Taſte riſes to an acute diſcernment, and a lively enjoyment of the moſt refined beauties.

This inequality of Taſte amongſt mankind is to be aſcribed, undoubtedly, in ſome degree, to the different frame of their natures; to nicer organs, and more delicate internal powers, with which

which ſome are endowed beyond others: yet it is owing ſtill more to culture and education. Taſte is certainly one of the moſt improveable faculties which adorns our nature. We may eaſily be convinced of the truth of this aſſertion, by only reflecting on that immenſe ſuperiority which education and improvement give to civilized, above barbarous nations, in refinement of Taſte; and on the advantage which they give, in the ſame nation, to thoſe who have ſtudied the liberal arts, above the rude and illiterate vulgar.

Reaſon and good ſenſe have ſo extenſive an influence on all the operations and deciſions of Taſte, that a completely good Taſte may well be conſidered as a power compounded of natural ſenſibility to beauty, and of improved underſtanding. To be convinced of the truth of this poſition we may obſerve, that the greater part of the productions of Genius are no other than imitations of nature; repreſentations of the characters, actions, or manners of men. Now the pleaſure we experience from ſuch imitations, or repreſentations, is founded on mere Taſte: but to judge whether they be properly executed, be-

longs to the underſtanding, which compares the copy with the original.

In reading, for inſtance, the Æneid of Virgil, a great part of our pleaſure ariſes from the proper conduct of the plan or ſtory; from the union of all the parts together with probability and due connection; from the adoption of the characters from nature, the correſpondence of the ſentiments to the characters, and of the ſtyle to the ſentiments. The pleaſure which is derived from a poem ſo conducted, is felt or enjoyed by Taſte as an internal ſenſe; but the diſcovery of this conduct in the poem is owing to reaſon; and the more that reaſon enables us to diſcover ſuch propriety in the conduct, the greater will be our pleaſure.

The characters or conſtituents of Taſte, when brought to its moſt perfect ſtate, may be reduced to two; Delicacy and Correctneſs.

Delicacy of Taſte refers principally to the perfection of that natural ſenſibility on which Taſte is founded. It implies thoſe finer organs or powers which enable us to diſcover beauties that are concealed from a vulgar eye. It is judged of by the ſame marks that we employ in judging

judging of the delicacy of an external ſenſe. As the goodneſs of the palate is not tried by ſtrong flavours, but by a mixture of ingredients, where, notwithſtanding the confuſion, we remain ſenſible of each; in like manner, delicacy of internal Taſte is viſible, by a quick and lively ſenſibility to its fineſt, moſt compounded, or moſt latent objects.

Correctneſs of Taſte reſpects the improvement which that faculty receives through its connection with the underſtanding. A man of correct Taſte is one who is never impoſed on by counterfeit beauties; who carries always in his own mind that ſtandard of good ſenſe which he employs in judging of every thing. He eſtimates with propriety the relative merit of the ſeveral beauties which he meets with in any work of genius; refers them to their proper claſſes; aſſigns the principles, as far as they can be traced, whence their power of pleaſing us is derived; and is pleaſed himſelf preciſely in that degree in which he ought, and no more.

Taſte is certainly not an arbitrary principle, which is ſubject to the fancy of every individual, and which admits of no criterion for determin-

ing whether it be true or falſe. Its foundation is the ſame in every human mind. It is built upon ſentiments and perceptions which are inſeparable from our nature; and which generally operate with the ſame uniformity as our other intellectual principles. When theſe ſentiments are perverted by ignorance, or deformed by prejudice, they may be rectified by reaſon. Their ſound and natural ſtate is finally determined, by comparing them with the general Taſte of mankind. Let men declaim, as much as they pleaſe, concerning the caprice and the uncertainty of Taſte: it is found by experience, that there are beauties, which, if diſplayed in a proper light, have power to command laſting and univerſal admiration. In every compoſition, what intereſts the imagination, and touches the heart, gives pleaſure to all ages and to all nations. There is a certain ſtring, which being properly ſtruck, the human heart is ſo made as to accord to it.

Hence the general and decided teſtimony which the moſt improved nations of the earth, throughout a long ſeries of ages, have concurred to beſtow on ſome few works of genius; ſuch as the Iliad of Homer, and the Æneid of Virgil.

Hence

Hence the authority which ſuch works have obtained, as ſtandards in ſome degree of poetical compoſition; ſince from them we are enabled to collect what the ſenſe of mankind is, with reſpect to thoſe beauties which give them the higheſt pleaſure, and which therefore poetry ought to exhibit. Authority or prejudice may, in one age or country, give a ſhort-lived reputation to an inſipid poet, or a bad artiſt; but when foreigners, or when poſterity examine his works, his faults are diſcovered, and the genuine Taſte of human nature is ſeen. Time, which overthrows the illuſions of opinion, and the whimſies of caprice, confirms and eſtabliſhes the deciſions of nature.

CRITICISM—GENIUS—PLEASURES OF TASTE—SUBLIMITY IN OBJECTS.

TRUE CRITICISM is the application of Taſte and of good ſenſe to the ſeveral fine arts. Its deſign is to diſtinguiſh what is beautiful and what is faulty in every performance. From particular inſtances it aſcends to general principles; and gradually forms rules or concluſions concerning the ſeveral kinds of Beauty in the works of Genius.

Criticiſm is an art founded entirely on expe-rience; on the obſervation of ſuch beauties as have been found to pleaſe mankind moſt gener-ally. For example; Ariſtotle's rules concern-ing the unity of action in dramatic and epic com-poſition, were not firſt diſcovered by logical rea-ſoning, and then applied to poetry; but they were deduced from the practice of Homer and Sophocles. They were founded upon obſerving the ſuperior pleaſure which we derive from the relation of an action which is one and entire, beyond what we receive from the relation of ſcattered and unconnected facts.

A ſu-

A ſuperior Genius, indeed, will of himſelf, uninſtructed, compoſe in ſuch a manner as ſhall be agreeable to the moſt important rules of Criticiſm; for ſince theſe rules are founded in nature, nature will frequently ſuggeſt them in practice. Homer, it is certain, was acquainted with no ſyſtems of the art of poetry. Guided by Genius alone, he compoſed in verſe a regular ſtory, which all ſucceeding ages have admired. This, however, is no argument againſt the uſefulneſs of Criticiſm. For, ſince no human genius is perfect, there is no writer who may not receive aſſiſtance from critical obſervations upon the beauties and defects of thoſe who have gone before him. No rules can, indeed, ſupply the defect of genius, or inſpire it where it is wanting; but they may often guide it into its proper channel; they may correct its extravagancies, and teach it the moſt juſt and proper imitation of nature. Critical rules are intended chiefly to point out the faults which ought to be avoided. We muſt be indebted to nature for the production of ſuperlative beauties.

GENIUS is a word which, in common acceptation, extends much farther than to the objects

of Taſte. It ſignifies that talent or aptitude which we receive from nature, in order to excel in any one thing whatever. A man is ſaid to have a genius for mathematics, as well as a genius for poetry; a genius for war, for politics, or for any mechanical employment.

Genius may be greatly improved and cultivated by art and ſtudy; but by them alone it cannot be acquired. As it is a higher faculty than Taſte, it is ever, according to the common frugality of nature, more limited in the ſphere of its operations. There are perſons, not unfrequently to be met with, who have an excellent Taſte in ſeveral of the polite arts; ſuch as muſic, poetry, painting, and eloquence, altogether: but an excellent execution in all theſe arts is very ſeldom found in any individual; or rather, indeed, is not to be looked for. An univerſal Genius, or one who is equally and indifferently inclined towards ſeveral different profeſſions and arts, is not likely to excel in any. Although there may be ſome few exceptions, yet in general it is true, that when the bent of the mind is wholly directed towards ſome one object, excluſively, as it were, of others, there is

the

the faireſt proſpect of eminence in that, whatever it may be. Extreme heat can be produced only when the rays converge to a ſingle point. Young people are highly intereſted in this remark; ſince it may teach them to examine with care, and to purſue with ardour, that path which nature has marked out for their peculiar exertions.

The nature of Taſte, the importance of Criticiſm, and the diſtinction between Taſte and Genius, being thus explained; the ſources of the Pleaſures of Taſte ſhall next be conſidered. Here a very extenſive field is opened; no leſs than all the Pleaſures of the Imagination, as they are generally called, whether afforded us by natural objects, or by imitations and deſcriptions of them. It is not, however, neceſſary to the purpoſe of the preſent Work, that all of them ſhould be examined fully; the pleaſure which we receive from diſcourſe, or writing, being the principal object of them. Our deſign is, to give ſome openings into the Pleaſures of Taſte in general; and to inſiſt, more particularly, upon Sublimity and Beauty.

As yet, we are far from having attained to any ſyſtem concerning this ſubject. A regular enquiry into it was firſt attempted by Mr. Addiſon, in his Eſſay on the Pleaſures of the Imagination. By him theſe Pleaſures are reduced under three heads: Beauty, Grandeur, and Novelty. His ſpeculations on this ſubject, if not remarkably profound, are, however, very beautiful and entertaining; and he has the merit of having diſcovered a tract which was before untrod. Since his time, the advances which have been made in this part of philoſophical criticiſm are not conſiderable; which is owing, doubtleſs, to that thinneſs and ſubtilty, which are diſcovered to be properties of all the feelings of Taſte. It is difficult to enumerate the ſeveral objects which give pleaſure to Taſte; it is more difficult to define all thoſe which have been diſcovered, and to range them under proper claſſes; and when we would proceed farther, and inveſtigate the efficient cauſes of the pleaſure which we receive from ſuch objects, here we find ourſelves at the greateſt loſs. For example; we all learn by experience, that ſome figures of bodies appear to us more beautiful than others; on far-

ther

ther enquiry, we diſcover that the regularity of ſome figures, and the graceful variety of others, are the foundation of the beauty which we diſcern in them: but when we endeavour to go a ſtep beyond this, and enquire what is the cauſe of regularity and variety producing in our minds the ſenſation of beauty, any reaſon we can produce is extremely imperfect. Thoſe firſt principles of internal ſenſation, nature appears to have ſtudiouſly concealed.

It is ſome conſolation, however, that although the efficient cauſe be obſcure, the final cauſe of thoſe ſenſations lies commonly more open: and here we muſt obſerve, the ſtrong impreſſion which the powers of Taſte and Imagination are calculated to give us of the benevolence of our Creator. By theſe endowments, he hath widely enlarged the ſphere of the pleaſures of human life; and thoſe, too, of a kind the moſt pure and innocent. The neceſſary purpoſes of life might have been amply anſwered, though our ſenſes of ſeeing and hearing had only ſerved to diſtinguiſh external objects, without giving us any of thoſe refined and delicate ſenſations of beauty and grandeur, with which we are now ſo much delighted.

The

The pleaſure which ariſes from ſublimity or grandeur deſerves to be fully conſidered; becauſe it has a character more preciſe and diſtinctly marked, than any other of the pleaſures of the imagination; and becauſe it coincides more directly with our main ſubject. The ſimpleſt form of external grandeur is ſeen in the vaſt and boundleſs proſpects preſented to us by nature; ſuch as wide extended plains, to which the eye can find no limits; the firmament of heaven; or the boundleſs expanſe of the ocean. All vaſtneſs produces an idea of ſublimity. Space, however extended in length, makes not ſo ſtrong an impreſſion as height or depth. Though a boundleſs plain be a grand object, yet a lofty mountain, to which we look up, or an awful precipice or tower, whence we look down on the objects below, is ſtill more ſo. The exceſſive grandeur of the firmament ariſes from its height, added to its boundleſs extent; and that of the ocean, not from its extent alone, but from the continual motion and irreſiſtable impetuoſity of that maſs of waters. Wherever ſpace is concerned, it is evident, that amplitude or greatneſs of extent, in one dimenſion or other, is inſepa-

rable

rable from grandeur. Take away all bounds from any object, and you immediately render it ſublime. Hence infinite ſpace, endleſs numbers, and everlaſting duration, fill the mind with great ideas.

The moſt copious ſource of ſublime ideas ſeems to be derived from the exertion of great power and force. Hence the grandeur of earthquakes and burning mountains; of great conflagrations; of the boiſterous ocean; of the tempeſtuous ſtorm; of thunder and lightning; and of all the unuſual violence of the elements. A ſtream which glides along gently within its banks is a beautiful object; but when it precipitates itſelf with the impetuoſity and noiſe of a torrent, it immediately becomes a ſublime one. A race-horſe is beheld with pleaſure; but it is the war-horſe, "whoſe neck is cloth'd with "thunder," that conveys grandeur in its idea. The engagement of two powerful armies, as it is the higheſt exertion of human ſtrength, combines a variety of ſources of the ſublime; and has conſequently been ever conſidered as one of the moſt ſtriking and magnificent ſpectacles

which

which can be either preſented to the eye, or exhibited to the imagination in deſcription.

All ideas of the ſolemn and awful kind, and even bordering on the terrible, tend greatly to aſſiſt the ſublime; ſuch as darkneſs, ſolitude, and ſilence. The firmament, when filled with ſtars, ſcattered in ſuch infinite numbers and with ſuch ſplendid profuſion, ſtrikes the imagination with a more awful grandeur than when we behold it enlightened by all the ſplendour of the ſun. The deep ſound of a great bell, or the ſtriking of a great clock, are at any time grand and awful; but, when heard amidſt the ſilence and ſtillneſs of the night, they become doubly ſtriking. Darkneſs is very generally applied for adding ſublimity to all our ideas of the Deity. "He maketh darkneſs his pavilion; he dwelleth "in the thick cloud." Thus Milton—

——— How oft, amidſt
Thick clouds and dark, does Heaven's all-ruling Sire
Chuſe to reſide, his glory unobſcured;
And, with the majeſty of darkneſs, round
Circles his throne ———

Obſcurity, we may farther remark, is favourable to the ſublime. The deſcriptions given us

of

of the appearances of ſupernatural beings carry ſome ſublimity, though the conceptions which they afford us be confuſed and indiſtinct. Their ſublimity ariſes from the ideas which they always convey of ſuperior power and might, connected with an awful obſcurity. No ideas, it is evident, are ſo ſublime as thoſe derived from the Supreme Being: the moſt unknown, yet the greateſt of all objects; the infinity of whoſe nature, and the eternity of whoſe duration, added to the omnipotence of his power, though they ſurpaſs our conceptions, yet exalt them to the higheſt.

Diſorder is alſo very compatible with grandeur; nay, frequently heightens it. Few things which are exactly regular and methodical, appear ſublime. We diſcover the limits on every ſide; we perceive ourſelves confined; there is no room for any conſiderable exertion of the mind. Though exact proportion of parts enters often into the beautiful, it is much diſregarded in the ſublime. An immenſe maſs of rocks, thrown together by the hand of nature with wildneſs and confuſion, ſtrike the mind with more grandeur, than if they had been joined to each other with the moſt accurate ſymmetry There

There yet remains one claſs of Sublime Objects to be mentioned; which may be termed the Moral or Sentimental Sublime; ariſing from certain exertions of the mind; from certain affections and actions of our fellow-creatures. Theſe will be found to be chiefly of that claſs which comes under the name of Magnanimity or Heroiſm; and they produce an effect very ſimilar to what is produced by the view of grand objects in nature; filling the mind with admiration, and raiſing it above itſelf. Wherever, in ſome critical and dangerous ſituation, we behold a man uncommonly intrepid, and reſting ſolely upon himſelf; ſuperior to paſſion and to fear; animated by ſome great principle to the contempt of popular opinion, of ſelfiſh intereſt, of dangers, or of death; we are there ſtruck with a ſenſe of the ſublime. Thus Porus, when taken priſoner by Alexander, after a gallant defence, and aſked in what manner he would be treated? anſwering, "Like a King!" and Cæſar chiding the pilot who was afraid to ſet out with him in a ſtorm, "Quid times? Cæſarem vehis;" are good inſtances of the Sentimental Sublime.

The

The Sublime, in natural and in moral objects, is preſented to us in one view, and compared together, in the following beautiful paſſage of Akenſide's Pleaſures of the Imagination.

Look then abroad through nature; to the range
Of planets, ſuns, and adamantine ſpheres,
Wheeling, unſhaken, thro' the void immenſe;
And ſpeak, O Man! does this capacious ſcene,
With half that kindling majeſty, dilate
Thy ſtrong conception, as when Brutus roſe,
Refulgent from the ſtroke of Cæſar's fate,
Amid the croud of Patriots; and his arm
Aloft extending, like eternal Jove,
When guilt brings down the thunder, call'd aloud
On Tully's name, and ſhook his crimſon ſteel,
And bad the father of his country hail!
For lo! the tyrant proſtrate on the duſt;
And Rome again is free. ——

It has been imagined by an ingenious Author, that terror is the ſource of the ſublime; and that no objects have this character, but ſuch as produce impreſſions of pain and danger. Many terrible objects are indeed highly ſublime; nor does grandeur refuſe an alliance with the idea of danger. But the ſublime does not conſiſt wholly in modes of danger, or of pain. In many grand objects there is not the leaſt coincidence

cidence with terror; as in the magnificent proſpect of wide extended plains, and of the ſtarry firmament; or in the moral diſpoſitions and ſentiments which we contemplate with high admiration. In many painful and terrible objects alſo, it is evident, there is no ſort of grandeur. The amputation of a limb, or the bite of a ſnake, are, in the higheſt degree, terrible; but are deſtitute of all claim whatever to ſublimity. It ſeems juſt to allow, that mighty force or power, whether attended by terror or not, whether employed in protecting or in alarming us, has a better title, than any thing which has yet been mentioned, to be the fundamental quality of the ſublime. There appears to be no ſublime object, into the idea of which, ſtrength and force, either enter not directly, or are not, at leaſt, intimately aſſociated, by conducting our thoughts to ſome aſtoniſhing power, as concerned in the production of the object.

SUB-

SUBLIMITY IN WRITING.

THE foundation of the Sublime in Compoſition muſt always be laid in the nature of the object deſcribed. We muſt except, however, ſuch an object as, if preſented to our ſight, if exhibited to us in reality, would excite ideas of that elevating, that awful and magnificent kind, which we call Sublime: the deſcription, however finely drawn, is not entitled to be placed under this claſs. This excludes all objects which are merely beautiful, gay or elegant. Beſides, the object muſt not only in itſelf be ſublime, but it muſt be placed before us in ſuch a light as is beſt calculated to give us a clear and full impreſſion of it: it muſt be deſcribed with ſtrength, with conciſeneſs, and ſimplicity. This depends chiefly upon the lively impreſſion which the poet or orator has of the object which he exhibits; and upon his being deeply affected and animated by the ſublime idea which he would convey. If his own feeling be languid,

he

he can never inſpire his reader with any ſtrong emotion. Inſtances, which on this ſubject are extremely neceſſary, will clearly ſhow the importance of all theſe requiſites.

It is chiefly amongſt the moſt ancient authors that we are to look for the moſt ſtriking inſtances of the ſublime. The early ages of the world, and the rude uncultivated ſtate of ſociety, appear to have been peculiarly favourable to the ſtrong emotions of ſublimity. The genius of mankind was then very prone to admiration and aſtoniſhment. Meeting continually with new and ſtrange objects, their imagination was kept glowing, and their paſſions were often under a high agitation. They thought and expreſſed themſelves boldly, and without reſtraint. In the progreſs of ſociety, the genius and manners of men have undergone a change more favourable to accuracy than to ſtrength or ſublimity.

Of all writings, whether ancient or modern, the Sacred Scriptures afford us the moſt ſtriking inſtances of the ſublime. There the deſcriptions of the Supreme Being are wonderfully noble; both from the grandeur of the object, and the manner of repreſenting it. What a collection of

awful

awful and ſublime ideas is preſented to us in that paſſage of the eighteenth pſalm, where an appearance of the Deity is deſcribed! "In my "diſtreſs I called upon the Lord; he heard my "voice out of his temple, and my cry came "before him. Then the earth ſhook and trem-"bled; the foundations of the hills were "moved; becauſe he was wroth. He bowed "the heavens and came down, and darkneſs "was under his feet; and he did ride upon a "cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the "wings of the winds. He made darkneſs his "ſecret place: his pavilion round about him "were dark waters, and thick clouds of the "ſky." The circumſtances of darkneſs and terror are here applied with propriety and ſucceſs, for heightening the ſublime.

The celebrated inſtance given by Longinus, from Moſes, "God ſaid, let there be light; and "there was light," belongs to the true ſublime; and its ſublimity ariſes from the ſtrong conception it conveys, of an effort of power producing its effect with the utmoſt expedition and eaſe. A ſimilar thought is magnificently expanded in the following paſſage of Iſaiah (chap. xxiv.

24, 27, 28.) "Thus ſaith the Lord, thy Re-
" deemer, and he that formed thee from the
" womb: I am the Lord that maketh all
" things; that ſtretcheth forth the heavens
" alone; that ſpreadeth abroad the earth by
" myſelf; that ſaith to the deep, be dry, and I
" will dry up thy rivers; that ſaith of Cyrus,
" he is my ſhepherd, and ſhall perform all my
" pleaſure; even, ſaying to Jeruſalem, thou
" ſhalt be built; and to the Temple, thy foun-
" dation ſhall be laid."

Homer has, during all ages, been univerſally admired for ſublimity; and he is indebted for much of his grandeur to that native and unaffected ſimplicity which characterizes his manner. His deſcriptions of conflicting armies; the ſpirit, the fire, the rapidity which he throws into his battles, preſent to every reader of the Iliad frequent inſtances of ſublime writing. The majeſty of his warlike ſcenes are often heigntened, in a high degree, by the introduction of the Gods. In the twentieth book, where all theſe ſuperior beings take part in the engagement, according as they ſeverally favour either the Grecians or the Trojans, the poet appears to

put

put forth one of his higheſt efforts; and the deſcription riſes into the moſt awful magnificence. All nature ſeems to be in commotion. Jupiter thunders through the ſky; Neptune ſmites the earth with his trident; the ſhips, the city, and the mountains tremble: the earth ſhakes to its centre; Pluto leaps from his throne, fearing leſt the ſecrets of the infernal regions ſhould be laid open to the view of mortals. We ſhall tranſcribe Mr. Pope's tranſlation of this paſſage; which, though perhaps inferior to the original, is yet highly animated and ſublime.

But when the Powers deſcending ſwell'd the fight,
Then tumult roſe, fierce rage, and pale affright:
Now thro' the trembling ſhores Minerva calls,
And now ſhe thunders from the Grecian walls;
Mars, hov'ring o'er his Troy, his terror ſhrouds
In gloomy tempeſts, and a night of clouds;
Now thro' each Trojan heart he fury pours
With voice divine, from Ilion's topmoſt tow'rs;
Above, the Sire of Gods his thunder rolls,
And peals on peals redoubled rend the poles;
Beneath, ſtern Neptune ſhakes the ſolid ground,
The foreſts wave, the mountains nod around;
Thro' all her ſummits tremble Ida's woods,
And from their ſources boil her hundred floods;
Troy's turrets totter on the rocking plain,
And the toſs'd navies beat the heaving main;

Deep in the diſmal region of the dead,
The infernal Monarch rear'd his horrid head,
Leapt from his throne, leſt Neptune's arm ſhould lay
His dark dominions open to the day;
And pour in light on Pluto's drear abodes,
Abhor'd by men, and dreadful e'en to Gods!
Such wars the Immortals wage; ſuch horrors rend
The world's vaſt concave, when the Gods contend.

Conciſeneſs and ſimplicity will ever be found eſſential to ſublime writing. Simplicity is properly oppoſed to ſtudied and profuſe ornament; and conciſeneſs to ſuperfluity of expreſſion. It will eaſily appear, why a defect either in conciſeneſs or ſimplicity is peculiarly hurtful to the ſublime. The emotion excited in the mind by ſome great or noble object, raiſes it conſiderably above its common pitch. A ſpecies of enthuſiaſm is produced, extremely pleaſing while it laſts; but from which the mind is tending every moment to ſink into its ordinary tone or ſituation. When an author, therefore, has brought us, or is endeavouring to bring us into this ſtate, if he multiplies words unneceſſarily, if he decks the ſublime object, on all ſides, with glittering ornaments; nay, if he throws in any ornament which falls in the leaſt below the principal

principal image, that moment he changes the key; he relaxes the tenſion of the mind; the ſtrength of the feeling is emaſculated; the Beautiful may remain, but the Sublime is extinguiſhed. Homer's deſcription of the nod of Jupiter, as ſhaking the heavens, has been admired, in all ages, as wonderfully ſublime. Literally tranſlated, it runs thus: "He ſpoke, and bending his ſable brows, gave the awful nod; while he ſhook the ~~celeſtial~~ locks of his immortal head, all Olympus was ſhaken." Mr. Pope tranſlates it in this manner.

He ſpoke; and awful bends his ſable brows,
Shakes his ambroſial curls, and gives the nod,
The ſtamp of fate, and ſanction of a god:
High heaven with trembling the dread ſignal took,
And all Olympus to its centre ſhook.

The image is expanded, and attempted to be beautified; but in reality it is weakened. The third line—"The ſtamp of fate, and ſanction of "a God," is entirely expletive, and introduced only to fill up the rhyme; for it interrupts the deſcription, and clogs the image. For the ſame reaſon, Jupiter is repreſented as ſhaking his locks before he gives the nod: "Shakes his

" ambroſial curls, and gives the nod;" which is trifling and inſignificant: whereas, in the original, the hair of his head ſhaken is the conſequence of his nod, and makes a happy picturesque circumſtance in the deſcription.

The boldneſs, freedom, and variety of our blank verſe, is infinitely more propitious than rhyme, to all kinds of ſublime poetry. The fulleſt evidence of this is afforded by Milton; an author whoſe genius led him peculiarly to the ſublime. The whole firſt and ſecond books of Paradiſe Loſt are continued examples of it. Take only, for inſtance, the following noted deſcription of Satan, after his fall, appearing at the head of his infernal hoſts:

——————He, above the reſt,
In ſhape and geſture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower: his form had not yet loſt
All her original brightneſs, nor appeared
Leſs than Archangel ruined; and the exceſs
Of glory obſcured: as when the ſun new riſen,
Looks through the horizontal miſty air,
Shorn of his beams; or, from behind, the moon,
In dim eclipſe, diſaſtrous twilight ſheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs, Darkened ſo, yet ſhone
Above them all th' Archangel.

Here

Here a variety of ſources of the ſublime are joined together: the principal object ſuperlatively great; a high ſuperior nature, fallen indeed, but raiſing itſelf againſt diſtreſs; the grandeur of the principal object heightened, by connecting it with ſo noble an idea as that of the ſun ſuffering an eclipſe; this picture, ſhaded with all thoſe images of change and trouble, of darkneſs and terror, which coincide ſo exquiſitely with the ſublime emotion; and the whole expreſſed in a ſtyle and verſification familiar, natural, and ſimple, but magnificent.

Beſides ſimplicity and conciſeneſs, ſtrength is eſſentially neceſſary to ſublime writing. The ſtrength of deſcription proceeds, in a great meaſure, from a ſimple conciſeneſs; but it implies ſomething more, namely, a judicious choice of circumſtances in the deſcription, ſo as to exhibit the object in its full and moſt advantageous point of view. For every object has ſeveral faces, if the expreſſion be allowed, by which it may be preſented to us, according to the circumſtances with which we ſurround it; and it will appear ſuperlatively ſublime, or otherwiſe, in proportion as all theſe circumſtances are happily choſen,

and of a ſublime kind. In this the great art of the writer conſiſts; and it is, indeed, the principal difficulty of ſublime deſcription. If the deſcription be too general, and diveſted of circumſtances, the object is ſhewn in a faint light; and makes either a feeble impreſſion, or no impreſſion at all, on the reader. At the ſame time, if any inſignificant or improper circumſtances are mingled, the whole is degraded.

The nature of that emotion which is aimed at by ſublime deſcription, admits of no mediocrity, and cannot ſubſiſt in a middle ſtate; but muſt either highly tranſport us, or, if unſucceſsful in the execution, leave us exceedingly diſappointed and diſpleaſed. We endeavour to riſe along with the writer: the imagination is awakened, and put upon the ſtretch; but it ought to be ſupported; and if, in the midſt of its effort, it be deſerted unexpectedly, it muſt deſcend with a rapid and painful ſhock. When Milton, in his battle of the Angels, repreſents them as tearing up the mountains, and throwing them at one another; there are in his deſcription, as Mr. Addiſon has remarked, no circumſtances but what are truly ſublime:

From their foundations loos'ning to and fro,
They pluck'd the ſeated hills, with all their load,
Rocks, waters, woods; and by the ſhaggy tops
Uplifting, bore them in their hands.——

This idea of the giants throwing the mountains, which is in itſelf ſo grand, is rendered by Claudian burleſque and ridiculous; by the ſingle circumſtance, of one of his giants with the mountain Ida upon his ſhoulders, and a river which flowed from the mountain, running down the giant's back, as he held it up in that poſture. Virgil, in his deſcription of Mount Ætna, has been guilty of a ſlight inaccuracy of this kind. After ſeveral magnificent images, the poet concludes with perſonifying the mountain under this figure,

——— "Eructans viſcera cum gemitu"—

"belched up its bowels with a groan;" which, by making the mountain reſemble a ſick or drunken perſon, degrades the majeſty of the deſcription. The debaſing effect of this idea will appear in a ſtronger light, by obſerving what figure it makes in a poem of Sir Richard Blackmore; who, through an extravagant perverſity of taſte, had ſelected it for the principal circum-

ſtance in his deſcription; and thereby (as Dr. Arbuthnot humouroufly obſerves) had repreſented the mountain as in a fit of the cholic.

Ætna, and all the burning mountains, find
Their kindled ſtores, with inbred ſtorms of wind,
Blown up to rage, and roaring out, complain,
As torn with inward gripes and torturing pain;
Labouring, they caſt their dreadful vomit round,
And with their melted bowels ſpread the ground.

Such inſtances ſhow how much the ſublime depends upon a proper ſelection of circumſtances; and with how great care every circumſtance muſt be avoided, which, by approaching in the ſmalleſt degree to the mean, or even to the gay or the trifling, changes the tone of the emotion.

What is commonly called the ſublime ſtyle, is, for the moſt part, a very bad one; and has no relation whatever to the true Sublime. Writers are apt to imagine that ſplendid words, accumulated epithets, and a certain ſwelling kind of expreſſion, by riſing above what is cuſtomary or vulgar, contributes to, or even conſtitutes the ſublime: yet nothing is, in reality, more falſe. In genuine inſtances of ſublime writing, nothing of this kind appears. "God ſaid, let there be

"light;

" light; and there was light." This is truly ſtriking and ſublime: but put into what is vulgarly called the ſublime ſtyle; " The Sovereign " Arbiter of Nature, by the potent energy of a " ſingle word, commanded the light to exiſt;" and, as Boileau has juſtly obſerved, the ſtyle is indeed raiſed, but the thought is humbled. In general it may be obſerved, that the ſublime lies in the thought, not in the expreſſion; and when the thought is really noble, it will generally clothe itſelf in a native majeſty of language.

The faults oppoſite to the Sublime are principally two; the Frigid and the Bombaſt. The Frigid conſiſts in degrading an object, or ſentiment, which is ſublime in itſelf, by a mean or inadequate conception of it; or by a weak, low, or puerile deſcription of it. This betrays entire abſence, or at leaſt extreme poverty of genius. The Bombaſt lies in forcing a common or trivial object out of its rank, and endeavouring to raiſe it into the ſublime; or, in attempting to exalt a ſublime object beyond all the bounds of nature and propriety.

BEAUTY, AND OTHER PLEASURES OF TASTE.

BEAUTY, next to Sublimity, affords, undoubtedly, the higheſt pleaſure to the imagination. The emotion which it raiſes, is eaſily diſtinguiſhed from that of ſublimity. It is of a more gentle kind; it is more calm and ſoothing; it does not elevate the mind ſo much, but produces a pleaſing ſerenity. Sublimity excites a feeling, too violent to be laſting; the pleaſure proceeding from Beauty admits of longer duration. It extends alſo to a much greater variety of objects than Sublimity: to a variety indeed ſo great, that the ſenſations which beautiful objects excite differ exceedingly, not in degree only, but alſo in kind, from each other. Hence, no word is uſed in a more undetermined ſignification than Beauty. It is applied to almoſt every external object which pleaſes the eye or the ear; to many of the graces of writing; to ſeveral diſpoſitions of the mind: nay, to ſome objects of

mere

mere abſtract ſcience. We ſpeak frequently of a beautiful tree or flower; a beautiful poem; a beautiful character; and a beautiful theorem in mathematics.

Colour ſeems to afford the ſimpleſt inſtance of Beauty. Aſſociation of ideas, it is probable, has ſome influence on the pleaſure which we receive from colours. Green, for example, may appear more beautiful, by being connected in our ideas with rural ſcenes and proſpects; white, with innocence; blue, with the ſerenity of the ſky. Independent of aſſociations of this ſort, all that we can farther obſerve reſpecting colours is, that thoſe choſen for Beauty are commonly delicate, rather than glaring. Such are the feathers of ſeveral kinds of birds, the leaves of flowers, and the fine variation of colours ſhown by the ſky at the riſing and ſetting of the ſun.

Figure opens to us forms of Beauty more complex and diverſified. Regularity firſt offers itſelf to obſervation as a ſource of Beauty. By a regular figure is underſtood, one which we perceive to be formed according to ſome certain rule, and not left arbitrary or looſe, in the conſtruction of its parts. Thus a circle, a ſquare,

a triangle, or a hexagon, give pleaſure to the eye, by their regularity, as beautiful figures: yet a certain graceful variety is perceived to be a much more powerful principle of Beauty. Regularity ſeems to appear beautiful to us, chiefly, if not entirely, on account of its ſuggeſting the ideas of fitneſs, propriety and uſe, which have always a more intimate connection with orderly and proportioned forms, than with thoſe which appear not conſtructed according to any certain rule. Nature, who is the moſt graceful artiſt, hath, in all her ornamental works, purſued variety, with an apparent diſregard of regularity. Cabinets, doors, and windows, are made after a regular form, in cubes and parallelograms, with an exact proportion of parts; and thus formed, they pleaſe the eye for this juſt reaſon; that being works of uſe, they are, by ſuch figures, the better adapted to the ends for which they were deſigned. Yet plants, flowers, and leaves, are full of variety and diverſity. A ſtraight canal is an inſipid figure, when compared with the meanders of rivers. Cones and pyramids have their degree of beauty; but trees growing in their natural wildneſs, have infinitely more

beauty

beauty than when trimmed into pyramids and cones. The apartments of a houſe muſt be diſpoſed with regularity, for the convenience of its inhabitants; but a garden, which is intended merely for beauty, would be extremely diſguſting, if it had as much uniformity and order as a dwelling-houſe.

Motion affords another ſource of Beauty, diſtinct from figure. Motion of itſelf is pleaſing; and bodies in motion are, "cæteris paribus," univerſally preferred to thoſe at reſt. Gentle motion, however only belongs to the Beautiful; for when it is ſwift, or very powerful, ſuch as that of a torrent, it partakes of the Sublime. The motion of a bird gliding through the air, is exquiſitely beautiful; but the ſwiftneſs with which lightning darts through the ſky, is magnificent and aſtoniſhing. And here it is neceſſary to obſerve, that the ſenſations of ſublime and beautiful are not always diſtinguiſhed by very diſtant boundaries; but are capable, in many inſtances, of approaching towards each other. Thus, a gently running ſtream is one of the moſt beautiful objects in nature: but as it ſwells gradually into a great river, the beautiful, by

degrees,

degrees, is loſt in the ſublime. A young tree is a beautiful object; a ſpreading ancient oak is a venerable and ſublime one. To return, however, to the beauty of motion: it will be found to hold very generally, that motion in a ſtraight line is not ſo beautiful as in a waving direction; and motion upwards is commonly alſo more pleaſing than motion downwards. The eaſy curling motion of flame and ſmoke, is an object ſingularly agreeable. Mr. Hogarth obſerves very ingeniouſly, that all the common and neceſſary motions for the purpoſes of life, are performed by men in ſtraight or plain lines; but that all the graceful and ornamental movements are made in curve lines; an obſervation worthy of the attention of thoſe who ſtudy the grace of geſture and action.

Colour, figure, and motion, though they are ſeparate principles of Beauty; yet in many beautiful objects they meet together, and thereby render the beauty both greater and more complex. Thus in flowers, trees, and animals, we are entertained at the ſame time with the delicacy of the colour, with the gracefulneſs of the figure, and ſometimes likeways with the motion

of

of the object. The moſt complete aſſemblage of beautiful objects which can any where be found, is preſented by a rich natural landſcape, where there is a ſufficient variety of objects: fields in verdure, ſcattered trees and flowers, running water, and animals grazing. If to theſe be added, ſome of the productions of art, which are proper for ſuch a ſcene; as a bridge with arches, over a river, ſmoke riſing from cottages in the midſt of trees, and the diſtant view of a fine building diſcovered by the riſing ſun; we then enjoy, in the higheſt perfection, that gay, chearful, and placid ſenſation which characterizes Beauty.

The Beauty of the human countenance is more various and complex than any that we have yet examined. It comprehends the Beauty of colour, ariſing from the delicate ſhades of the complexion; and the Beauty of figure ariſing from the lines which conſtitute the different features of the face. But the principal Beauty of the countenance depends upon a myſterious expreſſion which it conveys of the qualities of the mind; of good ſenſe, or good humour; of candour, benevolence, ſenſibility, or other

amiable

amiable diſpoſitions. It may be obſerved, that there are certain qualities of the mind which, whether expreſſed in the countenance, or by words, or by actions, always raiſe in us a feeling ſimilar to that of Beauty. There are two great claſſes of moral qualities; one is of the high and the great virtues, which require extraordinary efforts, and is founded on dangers and ſufferings; as heroiſm, magnanimity, a ſcorn of pleaſures, and the contempt of death. Theſe, produce in the ſpectator an idea of ſublimity and grandeur. The other claſs is chiefly of the ſocial virtues, and ſuch as are of a ſofter and gentler kind; as compaſſion, mildneſs, and generoſity. Theſe excite in the beholder a ſenſation of pleaſure ſo nearly allied to that excited by beautiful external objects, that, though of a more exalted nature, it may without impropriety be claſſed under the ſame head.

Beauty of Writing, uſed in its more definite ſenſe, characterizes a particular manner; when it is to ſignify a certain grace and amenity in the turn either of ſtyle or ſentiment, for which ſome authors have been particularly diſtinguiſhed. In this ſenſe, it comprehends a manner neither

remarkably

remarkably ſublime, nor extravagantly paſſionate, nor uncommonly ſparkling; but ſuch as excites in the reader an emotion of the gently pleaſing kind, reſembling that which is raiſed by the contemplation of beautiful objects in nature; which neither lifts the mind very high, nor agitates it to exceſs; but ſpreads over the imagination an agreeable and complacent ſerenity. Mr. Addiſon is a writer entirely of this character; and is one of the moſt proper examples which can be given of it. Fenelon, the author of Telemachus, may be conſidered as another example. Virgil alſo, though very capable of riſing occaſionally into the ſublime, yet generally is diſtinguiſhed by the character of beauty and grace, rather than of ſublimity. Among orators, Cicero has more of the beautiful than Demoſthenes, whoſe genius carried him ſtrongly towards vehemence and pathos.

This much it is neceſſary to have ſaid upon the ſubject of Beauty; ſince, next to Sublimity, it is the moſt copious ſource of the Pleaſures of Taſte. But objects do not only delight the imagination by appearing under the forms of ſublime or beautiful. They likewiſe derive their

power

power of giving it pleaſure from ſeveral other principles.

Novelty, for example, has been mentioned by Mr. Addiſon, and by every writer on this ſubject. An object which has no other merit than being uncommon or new, by means of this quality alone, raiſes in the mind a vivid and an agreeable emotion. Hence that paſſion of curioſity, which prevails ſo univerſally among mankind. Objects and ideas to which we have been long accuſtomed, make too faint an impreſſion to give an agreeable exerciſe to our faculties. New and ſtrange objects rouſe the mind from its dormant ſtate, by giving it a ſudden and pleaſing impulſe. Hence, in a great meaſure, the entertainment we receive from fiction and romance. The emotion raiſed by Novelty is of a more lively and awakening nature than that produced by Beauty; but much ſhorter in its duration. For if the object has in itſelf no charms to retain our attention, the ſhining gloſs ſpread over it by Novelty ſoon wears away.

Imitation is alſo another ſource of pleaſure to Taſte. This gives riſe to what Mr. Addiſon calls, the Secondary Pleaſures of Imagination; which

which form, undoubtedly, a very extenſive claſs. For all imitation conveys ſome pleaſure to the mind; not only the imitation of beautiful or ſublime objects, by recalling the original ideas of beauty or grandeur which ſuch objects themſelves exhibited; but even objects which have neither beauty nor grandeur; nay, ſome which are terrible or deformed, give us pleaſure in a ſecondary, or repreſented view.

The pleaſures of melody and harmony appertain likewiſe to Taſte. There is no delightful ſenſation we receive either from beauty or ſublimity, but what is capable of being heightened by the power of muſical ſound. Hence the charm of poetical numbers; and even of the more concealed and looſer meaſures of proſe. Wit, humour, and ridicule, open likeways a variety of pleaſures to Taſte, altogether different from any that have yet been conſidered.

At preſent, it is not neceſſary to purſue any farther the ſubject of the Pleaſures of Taſte. We have opened ſome of the general principles: it is time now to apply them to our chief ſubject. If it be aſked, to what claſs of thoſe Pleaſures of Taſte which have been enumerated, that plea-

ſure

ſure is to be referred, which we receive from poetry, eloquence, or fine writing? The anſwer is, not to any one, but to them all. This peculiar advantage writing and diſcourſe poſſeſs, that they encompaſs ſo large and fruitful a field on all ſides, and have power to exhibit, in great perfection, not a ſingle ſet of objects only, but almoſt the whole of thoſe which give pleaſure to taſte and imagination; whether that pleaſure ariſe from ſublimity, from beauty in its various forms, from deſign and art, from moral ſentiment, from novelty, from harmony, from wit, humour, and ridicule. To which ever of theſe the peculiar inclination of a perſon's taſte is directed, from ſome writer or other he has it always in his power to receive the gratification of it.

It has been uſual among critical writers, to treat of diſcourſe as the chief of all the imitative or mimetic arts. They compare it with painting and with ſculpture, and in many reſpects prefer it juſtly before them. But it muſt be obſerved, that imitation and deſcription differ conſiderably in their nature from each other. Words have no natural reſemblance to the ideas or objects which they are employed to ſignify; but

but a ſtatue or a picture has a natural likeneſs to the original.

As far, however, as a poet or an hiſtorian introduces into his work perſons really ſpeaking, and by the words which he puts into their mouths, repreſents the converſation which they might be ſuppoſed to hold; ſo far his art may more juſtly be called imitative: and this is the caſe in every dramatic compoſition. But in narrative or deſcriptive works it cannot with propriety be called ſo. Who, for example, would call Virgil's deſcription of a tempeſt, in the firſt Æneid, an imitation of a ſtorm? If we heard of the imitation of a battle, we might naturally think of ſome mock-fight, or repreſentation of a battle on the ſtage; but would never imagine, that it meant one of Homer's deſcriptions in the Iliad. It muſt be allowed, at the ſame time, that imitation and deſcription agree in their principal effect, of recalling, by external ſigns, the ideas of things which we do not ſee. But, though in this they coincide, yet it ſhould be remembered, that the terms themſelves are not ſynonimous; that they import different means of producing the ſame end; and conſequently make different impreſſions on the mind.

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE.

TO form an adequate idea of the Riſe and Origin of Language, it is neceſſary to contemplate the circumſtances of mankind in their earlieſt and rudeſt ſtate. They were then a wandering, ſcattered race; no ſociety among them except families; and the family ſociety alſo very imperfect, as their mode of living, by hunting or paſturage, muſt have ſeperated them frequently from each other. In ſuch a condition, how could any one ſet of ſounds or words be univerſally agreed on as the ſigns of their ideas? Suppoſing that a few, whom chance or neceſſity threw together, agreed, by ſome means, upon certain ſigns; yet by what authority could theſe be propagated among other tribes or families, ſo as to ſpread and grow up into a language? One would imagine, that men muſt have been previouſly gathered together in conſiderable numbers, before language could be

fixed

fixed and extended; and yet, on the other hand, there ſeems to have been an abſolute neceſſity of ſpeech, previous to the formation of ſociety: for, by what bond could any multitude of men be kept together, or be connected in the proſecution of any common intereſt, until, by the aſſiſtance of ſpeech, they could communicate their wants and intentions to each other? So that, either how ſociety could ſubſiſt previous to language, or how words could riſe into a language, previous to the formation of ſociety, ſeem to be points attended with equal difficulty. And when we conſider farther, that curious analogy which prevails in the conſtruction of almoſt all languages, and that deep and ſubtile logic on which they are founded, difficulties increaſe ſo much upon us, on all ſides, that there ſeems to be no ſmall reaſon for referring the firſt origin of all language to divine inſpiration.

But ſuppoſing language to have a divine original, we cannot, however, imagine, that a perfect ſyſtem of it was all at once given to man. It is much more natural to ſuppoſe, that God taught our firſt parents only ſuch language as ſuited their preſent occaſions; leaving them, as

he

he did in other reſpects, to enlarge and improve it as their future neceſſities ſhould require: conſequently thoſe firſt rudiments of ſpeech muſt have been poor and narrow; and we are at full liberty to enquire in what manner, and by what ſteps, language advanced to the ſtate in which we now find it.

Should we ſuppoſe a period to exiſt before any words were invented or known, it is evident that men could have no other method of communicating their feelings to others, than by the cries of paſſion, accompanied by ſuch motions and geſtures as were farther expreſſive of emotion: Theſe, indeed, are the only ſigns which nature teaches all men, and which are underſtood by all. One who ſaw another going into ſome place where he himſelf had been frightened, or expoſed to danger, and who wiſhed to warn his neighbour of the danger, could contrive no other method of doing it than by uttering thoſe cries, and making thoſe geſtures, which are the ſigns of fear: juſt as two men, at this day, would endeavour to make themſelves underſtood by each other, who ſhould be thrown together on a deſolate iſland, ignorant of each other's language.

Thoſe

Thoſe exclamations, therefore, by grammarians called interjections, uttered in a ſtrong and paſſionate manner, were, undoubtedly, the firſt elements or beginnings of ſpeech.

When more enlarged communication became requiſite, and names began to be applied to objects, how can we ſuppoſe men to have proceeded in this application of names, or invention of words? Certainly, by aſſimilating, as much as they could, the nature of the object which they named, to the ſound of the name which they gave to it. As a painter, who would repreſent graſs, muſt make uſe of a green colour; ſo in the infancy of language, one giving a name to any thing harſh or boiſterous, would of courſe employ a harſh or boiſterous ſound. He could not act otherwiſe, if he deſired to excite in the hearer the idea of that object which he wiſhed to name. To imagine words invented, or names given to things, in a manner purely arbitrary, without any ground or reaſon, is to ſuppoſe an effect without a cauſe. There muſt always have been ſome motive, which led to one name rather than another; and we can ſuppoſe no motive which would more generally operate

upon men in their firſt efforts towards language, than a deſire to paint by ſpeech the objects which they named, in a manner more or leſs complete, according as it was in the power of the human voice to effect this imitation.

Wherever objects were to be diſtinguiſhed, in which ſound, noiſe, or motion were concerned, the imitation by words was ſufficiently obvious. Nothing was more natural than to imitate, by the ſound of the voice, the quality of the ſound or noiſe which any external object produced; and to form its name accordingly. Thus, in all languages, we diſcover a multitude of words which are evidently conſtructed upon this principle. A certain bird is called the Cuckoo, from the ſound which it emits. When one ſort of wind is ſaid to *whiſtle*, and another to *roar*; when a ſerpent is ſaid to *hiſs*; a fly to *buzz*, and falling timber to *craſh*; when a ſtream is ſaid to *flow*, and hail to *rattle*; the reſemblance betwixt the word and the thing ſignified is plainly diſcernible. But in the names of objects which addreſs the ſight only, where neither noiſe nor motion are concerned, and ſtill more in the terms appropriated to moral ideas, this analogy appears

to

to fail. Yet many learned men have imagined, that, though in ſuch caſes it becomes more obſcure, it is not altogether loſt; but that throughout the radical words of all languages, there may be traced ſome degree of correſpondence with the object ſignified.

This principle, however, of a natural relation between words and objects, can only be applied to language in its moſt ſimple and early ſtate. Though in every tongue ſome remains of it can be traced, it were utterly vain to ſearch for it throughout the whole conſtruction of any modern language. As the multitude of terms increaſe in every nation, and the vaſt field of language is filled up, words, by a thouſand fanciful and irregular methods of derivation and compoſition, deviate widely from the primitive character of their roots, and loſe all reſemblance in ſound to the things ſignified. This is the preſent ſtate of language. Words, as we now uſe them, taken in the general, may be conſidered as ſymbols, not as imitations; as arbitrary or inſtituted, not natural ſigns of ideas. But there ſeems to be no doubt, that language, the nearer we approach to its riſe among men,

will be found to partake more of a natural expreſſion.

Interjections, it has been ſhown, or paſſionate exclamations, were the firſt elements of ſpeech. Men laboured to communicate their feelings to each other, by thoſe expreſſive crics and geſtures which nature taught them. After words, or names of objects began to be introduced, this mode of ſpeaking by natural ſigns could not be all at once diſuſed: for language, in its infancy, muſt have been extremely barren: and there undoubtedly was a period, among all rude nations, when converſation was carried on by a very few words, intermixed with many exclamations and earneſt geſtures. The inconſiderable ſtock of words which men as yet poſſeſſed, rendered thoſe helps entirely neceſſary for explaining their conceptions; and rude, uncultivated individuals, not having always ready even the few words which they knew, would naturally labour to make themſelves underſtood, by changing their tones of voice, and accompanying their tones with the moſt expreſſive geſticulations they could make.

To this mode of ſpeaking neceſſity firſt gave riſe. But we muſt obſerve, that after this neceſſity had, in a great degree, ceaſed, by language becoming, in proceſs of time, more extenſive and copious, the ancient manner of ſpeech ſtill ſubſiſted among many nations; and what had ariſen from neceſſity, continued to be uſed for ornament. In the Greek and Roman languages, a muſical and geſticulating pronunciation was retained in a very high degree. Without having attended to this, we ſhall be at a loſs in underſtanding ſeveral paſſages of the Claſſics, which relate to the public ſpeaking and the theatrical entertainments of the ancients. Our modern pronunciation would have ſeemed to them a lifeleſs monotony. The declamation of their orators, and the pronunciation of their actors upon the ſtage, approached to the nature of recitative in muſic; was capable of being marked in notes, and ſupported with inſtruments; as ſeveral learned men have fully demonſtrated.

With regard to geſtures, the caſe was parallel; for ſtrong tones and animated geſtures, we may obſerve, always go together. The action both

of the orators and the players in Greece and Rome, was far more vehement than that to which we are accuſtomed. To us, Roſcius would have appeared a madman. Geſture was of ſuch conſequence upon the ancient ſtage, that there is reaſon for believing, that on ſome occaſions the ſpeaking and the acting part were divided; which, according to our ideas, would form a ſtrange exhibition: one player ſpoke the words in the proper tones, while another expreſſed the correſponding motions aud geſtures. Cicero tells us, that it was a conteſt between him and Roſcius, whether he could expreſs a ſentiment in a greater variety of phraſes, or Roſcius in a greater variety of intelligible ſignificant geſtures. At laſt geſture engroſſed the ſtage entirely; for under the reigns of Auguſtus and Tiberius, the favourite entertainment of the Public was the Pantomime, which was carried on by geſticulation only. The people were moved, and wept at it as much as at tragedies; and the paſſion for it became ſo violent, that laws were inſtituted for reſtraining the ſenators from ſtudying the pantomime art. Now, though in declamations and theatrical exhibitions, both

tone

tone and geſture were, undoubtedly, carried much farther than in common diſcourſe; yet public ſpeaking of any kind muſt, in every country, bear ſome proportion to the manner which is uſed in converſation; and ſuch public entertainments could never have been reliſhed by a nation, whoſe tones and geſtures in diſcourſe, were as languid as ours.

The early language of mankind being entirely compoſed of words deſcriptive of ſenſible objects, became, of neceſſity, extremely metaphorical. For, to ſignify any deſire or paſſion, or any act or feeling of the mind, they had no fixed expreſſion which was appropriated to that purpoſe; but were obliged to paint the emotion or paſſion which they felt, by alluding to thoſe ſenſible objects which had moſt connection with it, and which could render it, in ſome degree, viſible to others.

It was not, however, neceſſity alone which gave riſe to this pictured ſtyle. In the infancy of all ſocieties, fear and ſurpriſe, wonder and aſtoniſhment, are the moſt frequent paſſions of mankind. Their language will neceſſarily be affected by this character of their minds. They

will be diſpoſed to paint every thing in the ſtrongeſt and moſt glowing colours. Even the manner in which the firſt tribes of men uttered their words, would have conſiderable influence on their ſtyle. Wherever ſtrong exclamations, tones, and geſtures, are connected with converſation, the imagination is always more exerciſed; a greater effort of fancy and paſſion is excited. Thus the fancy being kept awake, and rendered more ſprightly by this mode of utterance, operates upon ſtyle, and gives it additional life and ſpirit.

As one proof, among many others which might be produced, of the truth of theſe obſervations, we ſhall tranſcribe a ſpeech from Colden's Hiſtory of the Five Indian Nations, which was delivered by their Chiefs, when entering on a treaty of peace with us, in the following language. "We are happy in having buried under ground the red axe, that has ſo often been "dyed with the blood of our brethren. Now, "in this fort, we enter the axe, and plant the "tree of peace. We plant a tree, whoſe top "will reach the ſun; and its branches ſpread "abroad, ſo that it ſhall be ſeen afar off. May

"its

" its growth never be ſtifled and choaked; but
" may it ſhade both your country and ours with
" its leaves! Let us make faſt its roots, and ex-
" tend them to the utmoſt of your colonies. If
" the French ſhould come to ſhake this tree,
" we would know it by the motion of its roots,
" reaching into our country. May the Great
" Spirit allow us to reſt in tranquility upon our
" mats, and never again dig up the axe to cut
" down the tree of peace! Let the earth be trod
" hard over it, where it lies buried. Let a
" ſtrong ſtream run under the pit, to waſh the
" evil away out of our ſight and remembrance.
" The fire that had long burned in Albany is
" extinguiſhed. The bloody bed is waſhed
" clean, and the tears are wiped from our eyes.
" We now renew the covenant chain of friend-
" ſhip. Let it be kept bright, and clean as ſil-
" ver, and not ſuffered to contract any ruſt.
" Let not any one pull away his arm from it."

As Language, in its progreſs, began to grow more copious, it gradually loſt that figurative ſtyle which was its original characteriſtic. The vehement manner of ſpeaking by tones and geſtures became leſs univerſal. Inſtead of Poets,

Philoſophers became the inſtructors of mankind; and in their reaſoning on all ſubjects, introduced that plainer and more ſimple ſtyle of compoſition, which we now call Proſe. Thus the ancient metaphorical and poetical dreſs of Language was, at length, laid aſide from the intercourſe of men, and reſerved for thoſe occaſions only on which ornament was profeſſedly ſtudied.

RISE

RISE AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE AND OF WRITING.

IF we examine the order in which words are arranged in a ſentence, we find a very remarkable difference between the ancient and modern tongues. The conſideration of this will ſerve to unfold farther the genius of Language, and to diſcover the cauſes of thoſe alterations which it has undergone, in the progreſs of ſociety.

To conceive diſtinctly the nature of this alteration, we muſt go back, as before, to the moſt early period of Language. Let us figure to ourſelves a Savage, beholding ſome object, ſuch as fruit, which he earneſtly deſires, and requeſts another to give it to him. Suppoſe him unacquainted with words; he would then ſtrive to make himſelf underſtood by pointing eagerly at the object which he deſired, and uttering at the ſame time a paſſionate cry. Suppoſing him to have acquired words, the firſt word which he uttered would, conſequently, be the name of

that object. He would not expreſs himſelf according to our order of conſtruction, "Give me "fruit;" but according to the Latin order, "Fruit give me," --- "Fructum da mihi:" for this evident reaſon, that his attention was wholly directed towards fruit, the object of his deſire. From hence we might conclude, *à priori*, that this would be the order in which words were moſt commonly arranged in the infancy of Language; and accordingly we find, in reality, that in this order words are arranged in moſt of the ancient tongues, as in the Greek and the Latin; and it is ſaid likewiſe, in the Ruſſian, the Sclavonic, the Gaëlic, and ſeveral of the American tongues.

The modern languages of Europe have adopted a different arrangement from the ancient. In their proſe compoſitions, very little variety is admitted in the collocation of words: they are chiefly fixed to one order, which may be called the Order of the Underſtanding. They place firſt in the ſentence the perſon or thing which ſpeaks or acts, next, its action, and finally, the object of its action. Thus an Engliſh Writer, paying a compliment to a great man, would

ſay,

ſay, " It is impoſſible for me to paſs over in " ſilence ſuch diſtinguiſhed mildneſs, ſuch un- " uſual and unheard of clemency, and ſuch un- " common moderation, in the exerciſe of ſu- " preme power." Here is firſt preſented to us the perſon who ſpeaks, " It is impoſſible for " me;" next, what the ſame perſon is to do, " impoſſible for him *to paſs over in ſilence*;" and laſtly, the object which excites him to action, " the mildneſs, clemency, and modera- " tion of his patron." Cicero, from whom theſe words are tranſlated, exactly changes this order; he begins with the object, places that firſt, which was the exciting idea in the ſpeaker's mind, and ends with the ſpeaker and his action. " Tantam manſuetudinem, tam inuſitatam in- " auditamque clementiam, tantumque in ſumma " poteſtate rerum omnium modum, tacitus nullo " modo præterire poſſum." Here, it muſt be obſerved, the Latin order is more animated; the Engliſh more clear and diſtinct.

Our language naturally allows a greater liberty for tranſpoſition and inverſion in poetry than in proſe. Even there, however, that liberty is confined within narrow limits, in compariſon

of

of the ancient languages. In this reſpect the modern tongues vary from each other. The Italian approaches the neareſt in its character to the ancient tranſpoſition; the Engliſh has more inverſion than the reſt; and the French has the leaſt of all.

Writing is an improvement upon Speech, and conſequently was poſterior to it in the order of time. Its characters are of two kinds; either ſigns for things, or ſigns for words. Thus the pictures, hieroglyphics, and ſymbols, employed by the Antients, were of the former ſort; the alphabetical characters, now employed by Europeans, of the latter.

Pictures were, certainly, the firſt attempt towards writing. Mankind, in all ages and in all nations, have been prone to imitation. This would ſoon be employed for giving imperfect deſcriptions of events, and for recording their remembrance. Thus, to ſignify that one man had killed another, they painted the figure of a dead man lying on the ground, and of another ſtanding over him, with a hoſtile weapon in his hand. When America was firſt diſcovered, this was the only kind of writing with which the

Mex-

Mexicans were acquainted. It was, however, a very imperfect mode of recording facts; ſince, by pictures, external events could only be delineated.

Hieroglyphical characters may be conſidered as the ſecond ſtage of the Art of Writing. They conſiſt in certain ſymbols, which are made to repreſent inviſible objects, on account of a reſemblance which ſuch ſymbols were ſuppoſed to bear to the objects themſelves. Thus, an eye repreſented knowledge; and a circle, having neither beginning nor end, was the ſymbol of eternity. Egypt was the country where this kind of writing was moſt ſtudied, and brought into a regular art. In theſe characters all the boaſted wiſdom of their Prieſts was conveyed. They pitched upon animals to be the emblems of moral objects, according to the qualities with which they ſuppoſed them to be endowed. Thus, imprudence was denominated by a fly; wiſdom by an ant: and victory by a hawk. But this ſort of writing was in the higheſt degree ænigmatical and confuſed; and conſequently a very imperfect vehicle of knowledge.

From

From hieroglyphics mankind gradually advanced to ſimple arbitrary marks, which ſtood for objects, though without any reſemblance or analogy to the objects ſignified. Of this nature was the manner of writing among the Peruvians. They uſed ſmall cords of different colours; and by knots upon theſe, of different ſizes, and variouſly ranged, they invented ſigns for giving information, and communicating their thoughts to one another. The Chineſe, at this day, uſe written characters of this nature. They have no alphabet of letters, or ſimple ſounds, of which their words are compoſed; but every ſingle character which they uſe is expreſſive of an idea; it is a mark which ſignifies ſome one thing or object. The number of theſe characters muſt, conſequently, be immenſe. They are ſaid, indeed, to amount to ſeventy thouſand. To be perfectly acquainted with them is the buſineſs of a whole life; which muſt have greatly retarded, among them, the progreſs of every kind of ſcience.

It is evident, that the Chineſe characters are, like hieroglyphics, independent of Language: are ſigns of things, and not of words. For we

are

are told, that the Japaneſe, the Tonquineſe, and the Coræans, who ſpeak different languages from each other, and from the inhabitants of China, employ, however, the ſame written characters with them, and thus correſpond intelligibly with one another in writing, though ignorant of the language ſpoken in their reſpective countries. Our arithmetical figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c. are an example of this ſort of writing. They have no dependence on words; each figure repreſents the number for which it ſtands; and conſequently, is equally underſtood by all the nations who have agreed in the uſe of theſe figures.

The firſt ſtep to remedy the imperfection, the ambiguity, and the tedioufneſs of each of theſe methods of communication which have been mentioned, was the invention of ſigns, which ſhould ſtand not directly for things, but for the words by which things were named and diſtinguiſhed. An alphabet of ſyllables ſeems to have been invented previous to an alphabet of letters. Such an one is ſaid to be retained, at this day, in Æthiopia, and ſome countries of India. But it muſt have been, at beſt, imperfect and ineffectual; ſince the number of characters, being

very

very conſiderable, muſt have rendered both reading and writing very complex and laborious.

To whom we are indebted for the ſublime and refined diſcovery of Letters, is not determined. They were brought into Greece by Cadmus the Phœnician, who, according to Sir Iſaac Newton's Chronology, was contemporary with King David. His alphabet conſiſted only of ſixteen letters. The reſt were afterwards added, according as ſigns for proper ſounds were found to be wanting. The Phœnician, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman alphabets, agree ſo much in the figure, the names, and the arrangement of the letters, as amounts to a demonſtration, that they were derived originally from the ſame ſource.

The ancient order of writing was from the right hand to the left. This method, as appears from ſome very old inſcriptions, prevailed even among the Greeks. They afterwards uſed to write their lines alternately from the right to the left, and from the left to the right. The inſcription on the famons Sigæan Monument is a teſtimony of this mode of writing, which continued till the days of Solon, the celebrated Legiſlator of Athens. At length, the motion from

the

the left hand to the right being found more natural and convenient, this order of writing was adopted throughout all the nations of Europe.

Writing was firſt exhibited on pillars, and tables of ſtone, afterwards on plates of the ſofter metals, ſuch as lead. As it became practiſed more extenſively, the leaves, and the bark of certain trees, were uſed in ſome countries; and in others tablets of wood, covered with a thin coat of ſoft wax, on which the impreſſion was made with a ſtylus of iron. Parchment, made of the hides of animals, was an invention of later times. Paper was not invented till the fourteenth century.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

THE uſual diviſion of Speech into eight parts; nouns, pronouns, verbs, participles, adverbs, prepoſitions, interjections, and conjunctions, might eaſily be proved not to be very accurate; ſince, under the general term of nouns, it comprehends both ſubſtantives and adjectives, which are parts of ſpeech entirely diſtinct; while it makes a ſeparate part of ſpeech of participles, which are only verbal adjectives. Yet, as we are moſt accuſtomed to this diviſion, and as logical exactneſs is not neceſſary to our preſent deſign, we ſhall adopt thoſe terms which habit has made familiar to us.

Subſtantive nouns are the foundation of Grammar, and are the moſt ancient part of ſpeech. When men had got beyond ſimple interjections or exclamations of paſſion, and had begun to communicate their ideas to each other, they would be obliged to aſſign names to the objects by which they were ſurrounded. Which-

ever

ever way he looked, foreſts and trees would meet the eye of the beholder. To diſtinguiſh the trees by ſeparate names would have been endleſs. Their common qualities, ſuch as ſpringing from a root; and bearing branches and leaves, would ſuggeſt a general idea, and a general name. The genus, a *tree*, would afterwards be ſubdivided into its ſeveral ſpecies of oak, elm, aſh, &c. by experience and obſervation.

Still, however, only general terms of ſpeech were adopted. For the oak, the elm, and the aſh, were names of whole claſſes of objects, each of which comprehended an immenſe number of undiſtinguiſhed individuals. Thus when the terms man, lion, or tree, were mentioned in converſation, it could not be known which man, lion, or tree was meant, among the multitude comprehended under one name. Hence aroſe a very uſeful and curious contrivance for determining the individual object intended, by means of that part of ſpeech called the Article. In our language we have two articles, *a* and *the*; *a* is more general, *the* more definite. The Greeks have but one, ὁ ἡ τὸ, which agrees with our definite article *the*. They ſupply the place

of

of our article *a*, by the abſence of their article: Thus, Ανθρωπος ſignifies *a* man; ὁ Ανθρωπος, *the* man. The Latins have no article, but ſupply its place with the pronouns hic, ille, iſte. This, however, ſeems to be a defect in their language, ſince articles certainly contribute much to accuracy and preciſion.

To illuſtrate this remark, we may obſerve the different imports of the following expreſſions: "The friend of a king—the friend of the king "a friend of the king's." Each of theſe three phraſes has a ſeparate meaning, too obvious to be miſunderſtood. In Latin, "amicus regis" is entirely undetermined: it may bear any of the three ſenſes which have been mentioned; and requires other words to aſcertain its meaning.

Beſides this quality of being diſtinguiſhed by the article, three affections belong to ſubſtantive nouns; number, gender, and caſe, which deſerve to be conſidered.

NUMBER diſtinguiſhes nouns as one, or many, of the ſame kind, called the ſingular and plural; a diſtinction found in all tongues, and which muſt, indeed, have been coeval with the firſt origin of language; ſince there were few things

which

which men had more frequent neceſſity of expreſſing than the diſtinction between one and many. In the Hebrew, Greek, and ſome other ancient languages, we find not only a plural, but a dual number; the origin of which may very naturally be accounted for, from ſeparate terms of numbering being yet undiſcovered, and one, two, and many, being all, or at leaſt the principal numeral diſtinctions which mankind, at firſt, had any occaſion to make uſe of.

GENDER, which is founded on the diſtinction of the two ſexes, can, with propriety, be applied to the names of living creatures only. All other ſubſtantive nouns ought to belong to what is called by Grammarians the neuter gender. Yet, in moſt languages, a great number of inanimate objects have been ranked under the like diſtinctions of maſculine and feminine. Thus, for inſtance, in the Latin tongue, *enſis*, a ſword, is maſculine; *ſagitta*, an arrow, is feminine; and this aſſignation of ſex to inanimate objects ſeems to be entirely caſual and capricious. In the Greek and Latin, however, all inanimate objects are not ranked among the maſculine and feminine; but many of them are likewiſe claſſed

where

where all of them ought to have been, under the neuter gender, as *ſaxum*, a rock; *mare*, the ſea. But in the French and Italian tongues, the neuter gender is entirely unknown, and all their names of inanimate objects are put upon the ſame footing with thoſe of living creatures; and diſtributed without reſerve into maſculine and feminine. In the Engliſh language, when we uſe common diſcourſe, all ſubſtantive nouns that are not names of living creatures, are neuter, without exception. And ours is, perhaps, the only tongue in the known world (except the Chineſe, which is ſaid to reſemble it in this particular) in which the diſtinction of gender is properly and philoſophically attended to.

CASE, in declenſion, declares the ſtate or relation which one object bears to another, denoted by ſome variation made upon the name of that object; generally in the final letters, and by ſome languages, in the initial. All tongues, however, do not agree in this mode of expreſſion. Declenſion is uſed by the Greek and Latin, but in the Engliſh, French, and Italian, it is not found; or at moſt, it exiſts in a very imperfect ſtate. Theſe languages expreſs the relations of

objects,

objects, by means of the words called prepoſitions, which are the names of thoſe relations, prefixed to the name of the object. Engliſh nouns have no caſe whatever, except a ſort of a genitive, uſually formed by the addition of the letter S to the noun; as when we ſay "Pope's "Dunciad," meaning the Dunciad of Pope. Our perſonal pronouns have likewiſe a caſe, which correſponds with the accuſative of the Latin; I, me---he, him---who, whom. This, however, is but a diminutive reſemblance of that declenſion which is uſed in the ancient languages.

Whether the moderns have given beauty or utility to language, by the abolition of caſes, may perhaps be doubted: they have, however, certainly rendered it more ſimple, by removing that intricacy which aroſe from the different forms of declenſion, of which the Romans had no leſs than five; and from all the irregularities in theſe ſeveral declenſions. By obtaining this ſimplicity, it muſt be confeſſed, we have filled language with a multitude of thoſe little words called prepoſitions, which are perpetually recurring in every ſentence, and ſeem to have

encumbered ſpeech by an addition of terms; and by rendering it more prolix, to have enervated its force. The ſound of modern language has alſo become leſs agreeable to the ear, by being deprived of that variety and ſweetneſs which aroſe from the length of words, and the change of terminations, occaſioned by the caſes in the Greek and Latin. But, perhaps, the greateſt diſadvantage we ſuſtain by the abolition of caſes, is the loſs of that liberty of tranſpoſition in the arrangement of words, which the ancient languages enjoyed.

PRONOUNS are the repreſentatives of ſubſtantive nouns, and are ſubject to the ſame modifications with them of number, gender, and caſe. We may obſerve, however, that the pronouns of the firſt and ſecond perſon, *I* and *thou*, have had no diſtinction of gender in any language; for, ſince they always refer to perſons who are preſent to each other when they ſpeak, their ſex muſt be viſible, and therefore needs not to be diſtinguiſhed by a maſculine or feminine pronoun. But, as the third perſon may be abſent, or unknown, the diſtinction of gender there becomes requiſite, and conſequently in our language,

guage, it hath all the three genders belonging to it; *he*, *ſhe*, *it*. With reſpect to caſes; even thoſe languages which do not admit them in ſubſtantive nouns, ſometimes retain more of them in pronouns, for the greater readineſs in expreſſing relations; ſince pronouns occur ſo frequently in diſcourſe. The perſonal pronouns, in Engliſh, are allowed by Grammarians to poſſeſs two caſes beſides the nominative; a genitive and an accuſative: *I*, *mine*, *me*; *thou*, *thine*, *thee*; *he*, *his*, *him*; *who*, *whoſe*, *whom*.

ADJECTIVES, or terms of quality, ſuch as *ſtrong*, *weak*, *handſome*, *ugly*, are the plaineſt and moſt ſimple of all that claſs of words which are called attributive. They are common to all languages, and muſt have been very early invented; ſince objects could neither be diſtinguiſhed nor treated of in diſcourſe, till names were aſſigned to their different qualities.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

ENGLISH TONGUE.

OF all the parts of ſpeech, VERBS are by far the moſt complex and uſeful. From their importance we may juſtly conclude, that they were coeval with the origin of language; though a long time muſt have been requiſite to rear them up to that accuracy in which they now are found. It is highly probable, as Dr. Smith has obſerved, that the radical verb, or the earlieſt form of it, in moſt languages, would be what we now call the impersonal verb: "It rains; it thunders; "it is light;" and the like; as this is the moſt ſimple form of the verb, and merely declaratory of the exiſtence of an event, or of a ſtate of things. After pronouns were firſt invented, ſuch verbs became gradually perſonal, and were extended through all the variety of tenſes and moods.

The tenſes are contrived to imply the ſeveral diſtinctions of time. We think, in general, of

no

no more than its three great diviſions, the paſt, the preſent, and the future; and we might ſuppoſe, that if verbs had been ſo contrived as merely to expreſs theſe, no more was neceſſary. But language proceeds with much greater art and ſubtilty: It divides time into its ſeveral moments; it regards time as never ſtanding ſtill, but always flowing; things paſt, as more or leſs perfectly completed; and things future, as more or leſs diſtant, by different gradations. Hence the variety of tenſes which are found in almoſt every language.

The preſent may, indeed, be always regarded as one indiviſible point, which admits of no variety. "I walk, or I am walking, *ambulo*." But it is very different with the paſt. Even the pooreſt language has two or three tenſes to expreſs its varieties. Ours has no leſs than four: 1. A paſt action may be regarded as left unfiniſhed; which forms the imperfect tenſe, "I "was walking, *ambulabam*." 2. As juſt now finiſhed: this conſtitutes the proper perfect tenſe, which, in Engliſh, is always expreſſed by the help of the auxiliary verb, "I have "walked." 3. It may be conſidered as finiſhed

ſome time ſince; the particular time left undetermined. "I walked; *ambulavi*;" which may either ſignify, "I walked yeſterday, or, I "walked a twelvemonth ago." This is what Grammarians call an aöriſt, or indefinite paſt. 4. It may be conſidered as finiſhed before ſomething elſe which is alſo paſt. This is the pluſquamperfect. "I had walked; *ambulaveram*. "I had walked before you did me the favour of "calling upon me." Our language, we muſt perceive with pleaſure, has here an advantage over the Latin, which has only three variations upon the paſt time.

The varieties in the future time are chiefly two; a ſimple or indefinite future: "I ſhall "walk, *ambulabo*;" and a future having reference to ſomething elſe, which is likewiſe future. "I ſhall have walked; *ambulavero*:" I ſhall have walked before he pays me a viſit.

Beſide tenſes, verbs admit the diſtinction of voices, viz. the active and paſſive; according as the affirmation regards ſomething that is done, or ſomething that is ſuffered: "I love, or I am "loved." They admit likewiſe the diſtinction of moods, which are intended to expreſs the affirmation,

affirmation, whether active or paſſive, under different forms. The indicative mood ſimply declares a propoſition: "I write; I have writ-"ten." The imperative requires, commands, threatens: "Write thou; let him write." The ſubjunctive expreſſes the propoſition under the form of a condition, or as ſubordinate to ſome other thing, to which a reference is made: "I "might write; I could write; I ſhould write, "if the matter were ſo and ſo." This mode of expreſſing an affirmation, under ſo many various forms, together alſo with the diſtinction of the three perſons, *I*, *thou*, and *he*, conſtitutes what is called the conjugation of verbs, which comprehends ſo extenſive a proportion of the grammar of all languages.

Conjugation is reckoned moſt perfect in thoſe languages which, by changing either the termination or the initial ſyllable of the verb, expreſs the greateſt number of important circumſtances, without the aſſiſtance of auxiliary verbs. In the Eaſtern tongues, the verbs have few tenſes; but their moods are ſo conſtructed, as to expreſs an extenſive variety of circumſtances and relations. In the Hebrew, they ſay in one word, without

the aid of an auxiliary, not only, " I have " taught," but, " I have taught exactly, or " frequently; I have been commanded to teach; " I have taught myself." The Greek, which is the moſt perfect of all languages, is very regular and complete in all the moods and tenſes. The Latin, though formed on the ſame model, is not ſo perfect; particularly in the paſſive voice, which forms moſt of the tenſes; by the aid of the auxiliary " *ſum.*" In the modern European tongues, conjugation is very defective. The two great auxiliary verbs, to *have*, and to *be*, with thoſe other auxiliaries which we uſe in Engliſh, *do*, *ſhall*, *will*, *may*, and *can*, prefixed to the participle, ſuperſede, in a great meaſure, the different terminations of moods and tenſes, which formed the ancient conjugations.

The other parts of ſpeech, as they admit of no variations, will require only a ſhort diſcuſſion.

Adverbs are an abridged mode of ſpeech, expreſſing, by one word, what might, by a circumlocution, be reſolved into two or more words belonging to the other parts of ſpeech: " Va- " liantly," for inſtance, is the ſame as, " with " valour

"valour or courage." Hence, adverbs ſeem to be leſs neceſſary, and of later introduction into ſpeech than many other claſſes of words; and conſequently, the generality of them are derived from other words, previouſly invented and eſtabliſhed in the language.

Prepoſitions and conjunctions ſerve to expreſs the relations which things bear to one another, their mutual influence, dependencies, and coherence; and join words together into intelligible and ſignificant propoſitions. Conjunctions are commonly employed for connecting ſentences, or members of ſentences; as, *and*, *becauſe*, and the like. Prepoſitions are uſed for connecting words, by ſhowing the relation which one ſubſtantive noun bears to another; as, *of*, *from*, *to*, &c. The beauty and ſtrength of every language depends, in a great meaſure, on the proper uſe of conjunctions, prepoſitions, and alſo thoſe relative pronouns, which ſerve the ſame purpoſe of connecting the different parts of diſcourſe.

Having thus briefly conſidered the Structure of Language in general, we will now enter more particularly into an examination of our own Language.

The Engliſh which was ſpoken after the Norman Conqueſt, and continues to be ſpoken now, is a mixture of the ancient Saxon and the Norman French, together with ſuch new and foreign words as commerce and learning have, in a ſucceſſion of ages, gradually introduced. From the influx of ſo many ſtreams, from the connection of ſo many diſſimilar parts, it naturally follows, that the Engliſh, like every compounded language, muſt be ſomewhat irregular. We cannot expect from it, that complete analogy in ſtructure, which may be found in thoſe ſimpler languages which have been conſtructed, in a manner, within themſelves, and built on one foundation. Hence, our ſyntax is confined, ſince there are few marks in the words themſelves, which can ſhow their relation to each other, or point out either their concordance or their government in the ſentence. But, if theſe be diſadvantages in a compound language, they are balanced by other advantages which attend it; particularly by the number and variety of words with which ſuch a language is commonly enriched. Few languages are, in reality, more copious than the Engliſh. In all grave ſubjects,

particularly

particularly hiſtorical, critical, political, and moral, no complaint can juſtly be made of the barrenneſs of our tongue. We are rich likewiſe in the language of poetry: our poetical ſtyle differs conſiderably from proſe, not with reſpect to numbers only, but in the very words themſelves; which proves, what a compaſs and variety of words we can ſelect and employ, ſuited to thoſe different occaſions. In this we have an infinite ſuperiority over the French, whoſe poetical language, if it were not diſtinguiſhed by rhyme, would not appear to differ much, or conſiderably, from their ordinary proſe. Their language, however, ſurpaſſes ours in expreſſing whatever is delicate, gay, and amuſing. It is, certainly, the happieſt language for converſation in the known world; but, on the higher ſubjects of compoſition, the Engliſh is juſtly conſidered as far ſuperior to it.

The flexibility of a language, or its power of becoming either grave and ſtrong, or eaſy and flowing, or tender and gentle, or pompous and magnificent, as occaſions require, is a quality of great conſideration in ſpeaking and writing. This ſeems to depend on the copiouſneſs of a

language; the different arrangements of which its words are ſuſceptible; and the variety and beauty of the ſound of thoſe words, ſo as to correſpond to many different ſubjects. The Greek poſſeſſed theſe requiſites in a higher degree than any other language. It ſuperadded the graceful variety of its different dialects; and thereby readily aſſumed every kind of character which an author could wiſh, from the moſt ſimple and familiar, to the moſt formal and majeſtic. The Latin, though exceedingly beautiful, is inferior, in this reſpect, to the Greek: It has more of a ſettled character of ſtatelineſs and gravity; and is ſupported by a certain ſenatorial dignity, of which it is difficult for a writer uniformly to diveſt it. Among the modern tongues, the Italian poſſeſſes much more flexibility than the French; and ſeems to be, on the whole, the moſt perfect of all the modern dialects which have ariſen on the ruins of the ancient. Our language, though unequal to the Italian in flexibility, yet is not deſtitute of a conſiderable degree of this quality. Whoever conſiders the diverſity of ſtyle which appears in ſome of our beſt writers, will diſcover, in our tongue, ſuch a circle of expreſſion,

ſuch

ſuch a power of accommodation to the various taſtes of men, as redounds, in the higheſt degree, to its reputation.

Our language has been thought to be very deficient in harmony of ſound: yet the melody of its verſification, its power of ſupporting poetical numbers without the aſſiſtance of rhyme, is a ſufficient proof, that it is far from being unharmonious. Even the hiſſing ſound of which it has been accuſed, obtains leſs frequently than has been ſuſpected; in the final ſyllables eſpecially, where the letter *s* is transformed into a *z*, which is one of the ſounds on which the ear reſts with pleaſure; as in *has*, *theſe*, *loves*, *hears*, &c.

It muſt, indeed, be admitted, that ſmoothneſs is not the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of the Engliſh tongue. Strength and expreſſiveneſs, rather than grace and melody, conſtitute its character. It profeſſes, however, this property, of being the moſt ſimple, in its form and conſtruction, of all the European dialects. It is free from the intricacy of caſes, declenſions, moods, and tenſes. Its words are ſubject to fewer variations from their original form, than thoſe of any other language. Its ſubſtantives have no diſtinc-

tion

tion of gender, except what is made by nature; and but one variation in caſe. Its adjectives admit not of any change, except what expreſſes the degree of compariſon. Its verbs, inſtead of the varieties of ancient conjugation, admit no more than four or five changes in termination. A few prepoſitions and auxiliary verbs ſupply all the purpoſes of ſignificancy in meaning; whilſt the words, in general, preſerve their form unaltered. Hence our language acquires a ſimplicity and facility, which is the cauſe of its being frequently written and ſpoken with inaccuracy. We imagine that a competent ſkill in it may be acquired without any ſtudy; and that in a ſyntax ſo narrow and limited as ours, there is nothing which requires attention. But the fundamental rules of ſyntax are common to the Engliſh as well as to the ancient tongues; and a regard to them is abſolutely requiſite for writing or ſpeaking with any degree of purity, elegance, or propriety.

Be the advantages or defects of our language what they may, it certainly deſerves, in the higheſt degree, our ſtudy and attention. The Greeks and Romans, in the meridian of their

glory,

glory, beſtowed the higheſt cultivation on their reſpective languages. The French and Italians have employed conſiderable induſtry upon theirs; and their example is, indeed, highly laudable, and worthy of imitation. For, whatever knowledge may be gained by the ſtudy of other languages, it can never be communicated with advantage, unleſs by thoſe who can write and ſpeak their own language with propriety and ſkill. If the matter of an author be ever ſo good and uſeful, his compoſitions will always ſuffer in the public eſteem, if his expreſſion be deficient in purity and elegance. At the ſame time, the attainment of a correct and poliſhed ſtyle, is an object which demands application and labour. If any one ſuppoſes he can catch it merely by the ear, or acquire it by a haſty peruſal of ſome of our good authors, he will find himſelf much diſappointed. The many grammatical errors, the many impure expreſſions, which are to be found in authors who are far from being contemptible, demonſtrate, that an attentive ſtudy of the language is previouſly requiſite to the writing of it with propriety and elegance.

STYLE—PERSPICUITY AND PRECISION.

STYLE is the peculiar manner in which a man expreſſes his conceptions, by means of language. It is a picture of the ideas which riſe in his mind, and of the order in which they are there produced.

The qualities of a good ſtyle may be ranked under two heads; perſpicuity and ornament. It will readily be admitted, that perſpicuity ought to be eſſentially connected with every kind of writing. Without this, the brighteſt ornaments of ſtyle only glimmer through the dark; and perplex, inſtead of pleaſing the reader. If we are forced to follow a writer with much care, to pauſe, and to read over his ſentences a ſecond time, in order to underſtand them fully, he will never pleaſe us long. Mankind are too indolent to be fond of ſo much labour. Though they may pretend to admire the author's depth, after having diſcovered his meaning, they will ſeldom be inclined to look a ſecond time into his book.

The

The ſtudy of perſpicuity claims attention, firſt, to ſingle words and phraſes, and then to the conſtruction of ſentences. When conſidered with reſpect to words and phraſes, it requires theſe three qualities; *purity*, *propriety*, and *preciſion*.

Purity and propriety of language are often uſed indiſcriminately for each other; and, indeed, they are very nearly allied. A diſtinction, however, ſhould be made between them: Purity conſiſts in the uſe of ſuch words and ſuch conſtructions as belong to the idiom of the language which we ſpeak; in oppoſition to thoſe words and phraſes which are imported from other languages, or which are obſolete, or new coined, or employed without proper authority. Propriety is the choice of ſuch words as the beſt and moſt eſtabliſhed uſage has appropriated to thoſe ideas which we intend to expreſs by them. It implies their correct and judicious application, in oppoſition to vulgar or low expreſſions; and to words and phraſes, which would be leſs ſignificant of the ideas that we intend to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may be entirely Engliſh, without Scotticiſms or Galliciſms, or ungram-

ma-

matical expreſſions of any kind, and may, notwithſtanding, be deficient in propriety. The words may be ill ſelected; not adapted to the ſubject, nor fully expreſſive of the author's meaning. He has taken them, indeed, from the general maſs of Engliſh language; but his choice has been made without happineſs or ſkill. Style, however, cannot be proper without being pure: it is the union of purity and propriety which renders it graceful and perſpicuous.

The exact meaning of preciſion may be underſtood from the etymology of the word. It is derived from "*præcidere*," to cut off: It ſignifies retrenching all ſuperfluities, and pruning the expreſſion in ſuch a manner, as to exhibit neither more nor leſs than an exact copy of his idea who uſes it.

The words, which are employed to expreſs ideas, may be faulty in three reſpects. They may either not expreſs that idea which the author means, but ſome other which only reſembles, or is related to it; or, they may expreſs that idea, but not fully and completely; or they may expreſs it, together with ſomething more than he deſigns. Preciſion is oppoſed to theſe three

three faults, but particularly to the laſt; into this, feeble writers are very apt to fall. They employ a multitude of words to make themſelves underſtood, as they think, more diſtinctly; and they only confound the reader. The image, as they place it before you, is always ſeen double; and no double image is diſtinct. When an author tells us of his hero's *courage* in the day of battle, the expreſſion is preciſe, and we underſtand it fully. But if, from a deſire of multiplying words, he will praiſe his *courage* and *fortitude*, at the moment he joins theſe words together, our idea begins to waver. He intends to expreſs one quality more ſtrongly; but he is, in fact, expreſſing two. *Courage* reſiſts danger; *fortitude* ſupports pain. The occaſion of exerting each of theſe qualities is different; and being induced to think of both together, when only one of them ſhould engage our attention, our view is rendered unſteady, and our conception of the object indiſtinct.

The great ſource of a looſe ſtyle in oppoſition to preciſion, is the inaccurate and unhappy uſe of thoſe words called ſynonymous. Scarcely, in any language, are there two words which expreſs

preſs preciſely the ſame idea; and a perſon perfectly acquainted with the propriety of the language, will always be able to obſerve ſomething by which they are diſtinguiſhed. In our language, very many inſtances might be given, of a difference in meaning, among words which are thought to be ſynonymous; and as the ſubject is of importance, we ſhall point out a few of them.

Surprized, aſtoniſhed, amazed, confounded. We are ſurprized with what is new or unexpected; we are aſtoniſhed at what is vaſt or great: we are amazed with what we cannot comprehend; we are confounded by what is ſhocking or terrible.

Pride, vanity. Pride makes us eſteem ourſelves; vanity makes us deſire the eſteem of others.

Haughtineſs, diſdain. Haughtineſs is founded on the high opinion we have of ourſelves; diſdain on the low opinion we entertain of others.

To weary, to fatigue. The continuance of the ſame thing wearies us; labour fatigues us. A man is weary with ſtanding, he is fatigued with walking.

To abhor, to deteſt. To abhor, imports, ſimply, ſtrong diſlike; to deteſt, imports likewiſe ſtrong diſapprobation. I abhor being in debt; I deteſt treachery.

To invent, to diſcover. We invent things which are new; we diſcover what has been hidden. Galilæo invented the teleſcope; Harvey diſcovered the circulation of the blood.

Entire, complete. A thing is entire, when it wants none of its parts; complete, when it wants none of the appendages which belong to it. A man may occupy an entire houſe; though he has not one complete apartment.

Tranquillity, peace, calm. Tranquillity ſignifies a ſituation free from trouble, conſidered in itſelf: peace, the ſame ſituation, with reſpect to any cauſes which might interrupt it; calm, with reſpect to a diſturbed ſituation going before, or following it. A good man enjoys tranquillity in himſelf; peace with others; and calm after the ſtorm.

Enough, ſufficient. Enough relates to the quantity which we wiſh to have of any thing. Sufficient relates to the uſe that is to be made of it. Hence, enough commonly ſignifies a greater quantity than ſufficient does. The co-

vetous

vetous man never has enough; though he has what is ſufficient for nature.

Theſe, are a few, among many, inſtances of words in our language, which, by careleſs writers, are apt to be miſtaken for ſynonymous. The more the diſtinction in the meaning of ſuch words is weighed and attended to, the more accurately and forcibly ſhall we ſpeak and write.

STRUC-

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

A Proper conſtruction of ſentences is of ſuch importance in every ſpecies of compoſition, that we cannot be too ſtrict or minute in our attention to it. For, whatever be the ſubject, if the ſentences be conſtructed in a clumſy, perplexed, or feeble manner, it is impoſſible that a work, compoſed of ſuch periods, can be read with pleaſure, or even with profit. But, by an attention to the rules which relate to this part of ſtyle, we acquire the habit of expreſſing ourſelves with perſpicuity and elegance; and if a diſorder happen to ariſe in ſome of our ſentences, we immediately diſcover where it lies, and are able to correct it.

The properties moſt eſſential to a perfect ſentence ſeem to be the four following: 1. Clearneſs and preciſion. 2. Unity. 3. Strength. 4. Harmony.

Ambiguity is oppoſed to clearneſs and preciſion, and ariſes from two cauſes; either from a wrong

a wrong choice of words, or a wrong collocation of them. Of the choice of words, as far as regards perſpicuity, we have already ſpoken. Of the collocation of them we are now to treat. From the nature of our language, a leading rule in the arrangement of our ſentences is, that the words or members moſt nearly related, ſhould be placed in the ſentence as near to each other as poſſible; ſo as to make their mutual relation clearly appear. This rule is too frequently neglected even by good writers. A few inſtances will ſhow both its importance and its application.

In the poſition of adverbs, which are uſed to qualify the ſignification of ſomething which either precedes or follows them, a good deal of nicety is to be obſerved. "By greatneſs," ſays Mr. Addiſon, "I do not only mean the bulk of "any ſingle object, but the largeneſs of a whole "view." Here the ſituation of the adverb *only* renders it a limitation of the following word, *mean*. "I do not only mean."---The queſtion may then be aſked, What, does he more than mean? Had it been placed after *bulk*, ſtill it would have been improperly ſituated; for it might then be aſked, What is meant beſides the

bulk?

bulk? Is it the colour, or any other property? Its proper place is, certainly, after the word *object*: "By greatneſs I do not mean the bulk of "any ſingle object only;" for then, when it is aſked, What does he mean more than the bulk of a ſingle object? The anſwer comes out preciſely as the author intends, "the largeneſs of "a whole view." "Theiſm," ſays Lord Shafteſbury, "can only be oppoſed to poly-"theiſm, or atheiſm." It may be aſked then, is theiſm capable of nothing elſe, except being oppoſed to polytheiſm, or atheiſm? This is what the words literally mean, through the improper collocation of *only*. He ought to have ſaid, "Theiſm can be oppoſed only to polytheiſm, "or atheiſm." Theſe kind of inaccuracies may have no material inconvenience in converſation, becauſe the tone and emphaſis uſed in pronouncing them generally ſerve to ſhow their reference, and to make the meaning perſpicuous: but in writing, where a perſon ſpeaks to the eye, and not to the ear, he ought to be more accurate; and ſhould ſo connect thoſe adverbs with the words which they qualify, that his meaning cannot be miſtaken on the firſt inſpection.

When a circumſtance is interpoſed in the middle of a ſentence, it ſometimes requires art to place it in ſuch a manner as to diveſt it of all ambiguity. For inſtance, "Are theſe deſigns," ſays Lord Bolingbroke, Diſſert. on Parties, Ded. "which any man, who is born a Briton, in any "circumſtances, in any ſituation, ought to "be aſhamed or afraid to avow?" Here we are in doubt, whether words, "*in any circum-* "*ſtances, in any ſituation,*" are connected with "a man born in Britain, in any circumſtances or "ſituation," or with that man's "avowing his "deſigns, in any circumſtances, or ſituation, "into which he may be brought?" If the latter, as ſeems moſt likely, was intended to be the meaning, the arrangement ought to have been in this form: "Are theſe deſigns, which "any man who is born a Briton ought to be "aſhamed or afraid, in any circumſtances, in "any ſituation, to avow?"

Still more attentive care is requiſite to the proper diſpoſition of the relative pronouns, *who*, *which*, *what*, *whoſe*; and of all thoſe particles which expreſs the connection of the parts of ſpeech with one another. Since all reaſoning depends

depends upon this connection, we cannot be too accurate with regard to it. A trifling error may obſcure the meaning of the whole ſentence; and even where the meaning is apparent, yet where theſe relative particles are miſplaced, we always find ſomething awkward and disjointed in the ſtructure of the period. The following paſſage in Biſhop Sherlock's Sermons (vol. 2. ſerm. 15) will exemplify theſe obſervations:

"It is folly to pretend to arm ourſelves againſt "the accidents of life, by heaping up treaſures, "which nothing can protect us againſt, but the "good providence of our Heavenly Father. *Which* always refers grammatically to the immediately preceding ſubſtantive, which here is, "treaſures," and this would convert the whole period into nonſenſe. The ſentence ſhould have been thus conſtructed: "It is folly to pretend, by "heaping up treaſures, to arm ourſelves againſt "the accidents of life, which nothing can pro-"tect us againſt but the good providence of our "Heavenly Father."

We now proceed to the ſecond quality of a well arranged ſentence, which we termed its Unity. This is an indiſpenſible property. The

very nature of a ſentence implies one propoſition to be expreſſed. It may conſiſt, indeed, of parts; but theſe parts muſt be ſo intimately knit together, as to make the impreſſion upon the mind of one object, not of many.

To preſerve this unity, we muſt firſt obſerve, that during the courſe of the ſentence, the ſcene ſhould be changed as little as poſſible. There is generally, in every ſentence, ſome perſon or thing, which is the governing word. This ſhould be continued ſo, if poſſible, from the beginning to the end of it. Should a man expreſs himſelf in this manner: "After we came to "anchor, they put me on ſhore, where I was "ſaluted by all my friends, who received me "with the greateſt kindneſs." Here, though the objects are ſufficiently connected, yet by this mode of repreſentation, by ſhifting ſo often the place and the perſon, *we*, and *they*, and *I*, and *who*, they appear in ſuch a diſunited view, that the ſenſe of connection is nearly loſt. The ſentence is reſtored to its proper unity, by conſtructing it after the following manner: "Having come to an anchor, I was put on ſhore, "where I was ſaluted by all my friends, who "received me with the greateſt kindneſs."

Ano-

Another rule is, never to crowd into one ſentence, things which have ſo little connection, that they might bear to be divided into two or more ſentences. The tranſgreſſion of this rule never fails to hurt and diſpleaſe a reader. Its effect, indeed, is ſo diſguſting, that, of the two, it is the ſafeſt extreme, to err rather by too many ſhort ſentences, than by one that is overloaded and confuſed. The following ſentence, from a tranſlation of Plutarch, will juſtify this opinion: "Their march," ſays the author, ſpeaking of the Greeks under Alexander, "was through an "uncultivated country, whoſe ſavage inhabi- "rants fared hardly, having no other riches "than a breed of lean ſheep, whoſe fleſh was "rank and unſavoury, by reaſon of their conti- "nual feeding upon ſea-fiſh." Here the ſcene is repeatedly changed. The march of the Greeks, the deſcription of the inhabitants through whoſe country they paſſed, the account of their ſheep, and the reaſon of their ſheep being diſagreeable food, make a jumble of objects, ſlightly related to each other, which the reader cannot, without conſiderable difficulty, comprehend under one view.

Another rule for preſerving the unity of ſentences is, to keep clear of all parentheſes in the middle of them. Theſe may, on ſome occaſions, have a ſpirited appearance, as prompted by a certain vivacity of thought, which can glance happily aſide, as it is going along. But, in general, their effect is extremely bad; being a perplexed method of diſpoſing of ſome thought, which a writer has not art enough to introduce in its proper place. It is needleſs to produce any inſtances, ſince they occur ſo frequently among incorrect writers.

We ſhall add only one rule more for the unity of a ſentence; which is, to bring it always to a full and perfect cloſe. It need hardly be obſerved, that an unfiniſhed ſentence is no ſentence at all, with reſpect to any of the rules of grammar. But ſentences often occur, which are more than finiſhed. When we have arrived at what we expected to be the concluſion; when we have come to the word, on which the mind is naturally led to reſt, by what went before; unexpectedly ſome circumſtance ariſes, which ought to have been left out, or to have been diſpoſed of atteranother manner. Thus, for inſtance,

ſtance, in the following ſentence, from Sir William Temple, the adjection to the ſentence is entirely foreign to it. Speaking of Burnet's Theory of the Earth, and Fontenelle's Plurality of Worlds: "The firſt," ſays he, "could not "end his learned treatiſe without a panegyric "of modern learning, in compariſon of the an-"cient; and the other falls ſo groſsly into the "cenſure of the old poetry, and preference of "the new, that I could not read either of theſe "ſtrains without ſome indignation; which no "quality among men is ſo apt to raiſe in me as "ſelf ſufficiency." The word "indignation" ought to have concluded the ſentence; for what follows is altogether new, and is added after the proper cloſe.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

WE proceed now to the third quality of a correct ſentence, which we called Strength. By this is meant, ſuch a diſpoſition of the ſeveral words and members as ſhall exhibit the ſenſe to the beſt advantage; as ſhall render the impreſſion which the period is intended to make, moſt full and complete; and give every word and every member its due weight and importance. To the production of this effect, perſpicuity and unity are, no doubt, abſolutely neceſſary; but they are not of themſelves ſufficient. For a ſentence may be obviouſly clear; it may alſo be ſufficiently compact, or have the required unity; and yet, by ſome unfavourable circumſtance in the ſtructure, it may be deficient in that ſtrength or livelineſs of impreſſion, which a more happy collocation would have produced.

The firſt rule which we ſhall give for promoting the ſtrength of a ſentence, is, to take from it all redundant words. Whatever can be eaſily

ſupplied

ſupplied in the mind, is better omitted in the expreſſion: Thus, "Content with deſerving a "triumph, he refuſed the honour of it," is better than to ſay, "Being content with de- "ſerving a triumph, he refuſed the honour of it." It is certainly; therefore, one of the moſt uſeful exerciſes of correction, on a view of what we have written or compoſed, to contract that round-about mode of expreſſion, and to cut off thoſe uſeleſs excreſcences which are uſually found in a firſt draught. But we muſt be careful not to run into the oppoſite extreme, of pruning ſo cloſely, as to give a hardneſs and dryneſs to the ſtyle. Some leaves muſt be left to ſhelter and adorn the fruit.

As ſentences ſhould be diveſted of ſuperfluous words, ſo alſo they ſhould appear without ſuperfluous members. In oppoſition to this, is the fault we ſo frequently meet with, of the laſt member of a period being no other than the repetition of the former, in a different dreſs. For example; ſpeaking of beauty, "The very firſt "diſcovery of it," ſays Mr. Addiſon, "ſtrikes "the mind with inward joy, and ſpreads delight "through all its faculties." In this inſtance,

ſcarcely any thing is added by the ſecond member of the ſentence to what was already expreſſed in the firſt: And though the elegant ſtyle of Mr. Addiſon may palliate ſuch negligence; yet it is generally true, that language, diveſted of this prolixity, becomes more ſtrong, as well as more beautiful.

The ſecond direction we ſhall give for promoting the ſtrength of a ſentence is, to pay a particular attention to the uſe of copulatives, relatives, and all the particles employed for tranſition and connection. Some obſervations on this ſubject, which appear to be worthy of particular remembrance, ſhall here be noticed.

What is termed ſplitting of particles, or ſeparating a prepoſition from the noun which it governs, is ever to be avoided: As if we ſhould ſay, "Though virtue borrows no aſſiſtance "from, yet it may often be accompanied by, "the advantages of fortune." In ſuch inſtances, a degree of diſſatisfaction ariſes, from the violent ſeparation of two things, which, from their nature, ought to be intimately united.

The ſimplicity of ſtyle is much injured by the unneceſſary multiplication of relative and demon-

monſtrative particles: Thus if a writer ſhould ſay, "There is nothing which diſguſts me "ſooner than the empty pomp of language;" he would expreſs himſelf leſs ſimply than if he had ſaid, "Nothing diſguſts me ſooner than the "empty pomp of language." The former mode of expreſſion, in the introduction of a ſubject, or in laying down a propoſition to which particular attention is demanded, is exceedingly proper; but, in the ordinary current of diſcourſe, the latter is to be preferred.

With regard to the omiſſion or inſertion of the relative, we ſhall only obſerve, that in converſation and epiſtolary writing, it may be often omitted with propriety; but in compoſitions of a ſerious or dignified kind, it ſhould conſtantly be inſerted.

On the copulative particle *and*, which occurs ſo often in all kinds of compoſition, ſeveral obſervations are to be made. It is evident, that the unneceſſary repetition of it enfeebles ſtyle. By omitting it entirely, we often mark a cloſer connection, a quicker ſucceſſion of objects, than when it is inſerted between them. "*Veni, vidi,* "*vici*;"---"I came, I ſaw, I conquered;" ex-

preſſes with more ſpirit the rapidity of conqueſt, than if connecting particles had been uſed. When, however, we deſire to prevent a quick tranſition from one object to another, and when we are enumerating objects which we wiſh to appear as diſtinct from each other as poſſible, copulatives may be multiplied with peculiar advantage. Thus Lord Bolingbroke ſays, with elegance and propriety, "Such a man might fall "a victim to power; but truth, and reaſon, "and liberty, would fall with him."

A third rule for promoting the ſtrength of a ſentence is, to diſpoſe of the principal word, or words, in that place of the ſentence where they will make the moſt ſtriking impreſſion. Perſpicuity ought firſt to be ſtudied; and the nature of our language allows no extenſive liberty in the choice of collocation. In general, the important words are placed in the beginning of the ſentence. Thus Mr. Addiſon: "The pleaſures "of the imagination, taken in their full extent, "are not ſo groſs as thoſe of ſenſe, nor ſo re-"fined as thoſe of the underſtanding." This order ſeems to be the moſt plain and natural. Sometimes, however, when we propoſe giving

weight

weight to a ſentence, it is proper to ſuſpend the meaning for a while, and then to bring it out full at the cloſe: "Thus," ſays Mr. Pope, "on whatever ſide we contemplate Homer, "what principally ſtrikes us is his wonderful "invention."

A fourth rule for the ſtrength of ſentences is, to make the members of them go on riſing in their importance above one another. This kind of arrangement is called a climax, and is ever regarded as a beauty in compoſition. Why it pleaſes, is ſufficiently evident. In all things, we naturally love to advance to what is more and more beautiful, rather than to follow the retrograde order. Having viewed ſome conſiderable object, we cannot, without pain, be pulled back to attend to an inferior circumſtance. "*Caven-*"*dum eſt*," ſays Quintilian, "*ne decreſcat* "*oratio, et fortiori ſubjungatur aliquid infirmius.*" "We muſt take care that our compoſition ſhall "not fall off, and that a weaker expreſſion ſhall "not follow one of greater ſtrength." When a ſentence conſiſts of two members, the longeſt ſhould, in general, be the concluding one. Hence the pronunciation is rendered more eaſy;

and

and the ſhorteſt member of the period being placed firſt, we carry it more readily in our memory as we proceed to the ſecond, and ſee the connection of the two more clearly. Thus, to ſay, "When our paſſions have forſaken us, we "flatter ourſelves with the belief that we have "forſaken them," is both more graceful and more perſpicuous, than to begin with the longeſt part of the propoſition: "We flatter ourſelves "with the belief, that we have forſaken our "paſſions, when they have forſaken us."

A fifth rule for conſtructing ſentences with proper ſtrength, is to avoid concluding them with an adverb, a prepoſition, or any inſignificant word. By ſuch concluſions ſtyle is always weakened and degraded. Sometimes, indeed, where the ſtreſs and ſignificancy reſt chiefly upon words of this kind, they may, with propriety, have the principal place allotted them. No fault, for example, can be found with this ſentence of Bolingbroke: "In their proſperity, "my friends ſhall never hear of me; in their "adverſity, always;" where *never* and *always*, being emphatical words, are ſo placed, as to make a ſtrong impreſſion. But when thoſe infe-

rior

rior parts of ſpeech are introduced as circumſtances, or as qualifications of more important words, they ſhould invariably be diſpoſed of in the leaſt conſpicuous parts of the period.

We ſhould always avoid with care, the concluding with any of thoſe particles which diſtinguiſh the caſes of nouns; *of*, *to*, *from*, *with*, *by*. Thus it is much better to ſay, "Avarice is a "crime of which wiſe men are often guilty," than to ſay, "Avarice is a crime which wiſe "men are often guilty of." This kind of phraſeology all correct writers endeavour ſedulouſly to avoid.

Verbs uſed in a compound ſenſe, with ſome of theſe prepoſitions, are likewiſe ungraceful concluſions of a period; ſuch as, *bring about*, *lay hold of*, *come over to*, *clear up*, and many others of the ſame kind: inſtead of which, if a ſimple verb can be employed, the ſentence is always terminated with more ſtrength. Even the pronoun *it*, eſpecially when joined with ſome of the prepoſitions, as, *with it*, *in it*, *to it*, cannot, without a violation of grace, be the concluſion of a ſentence. Any phraſe which expreſſes a circumſtance only, cannot conclude a ſentence without

without great imperfection and inelegance. Circumſtances are, indeed, like unſhapely ſtones in a building, which try the ſkill of an artiſt, where to place them with the leaſt offence. We ſhould carefully avoid crouding too many of them together, but rather interſperſe them in different parts of the ſentence, joined with the principal words on which they depend. Thus, for inſtance, when Dean Swift ſays, "What I "had the honour of mentioning to your Lord-"ſhip, ſometime ago, in converſation, was not "a new thought."---(Letter to the Earl of Oxford.) Theſe two circumſtances, *ſometime ago*, and *in converſation*, which are here joined, would have been better ſeparated thus: "What "I had the honour, ſometime ago, of mention-"ing to your Lordſhip in converſation."

The laſt rule which we ſhall mention concerning the ſtrength of a ſentence is, that in the members of it, where two things are compared or contraſted to one another; where either a reſemblance or an oppoſition is deſigned to be expreſſed; ſome reſemblance in the language and conſtruction ought to be obſerved The following paſſage from Pope's preface to his Homer,

beau-

beautifully exemplifies the rule we are now giving. "Homer was the greater genius; Virgil "the better artiſt: in the one, we admire the "man; in the other, the work. Homer hurries "us with a commanding impetuoſity; Virgil "leads us with an attractive majeſty. Homer "ſcatters with a generous profuſion; Virgil "beſtows with a careleſs magnificence. Homer, "like the Nile, pours out his riches with a "ſudden overflow; Virgil, like a river in its "banks, with a conſtant ſtream. And when we "look upon their machines, Homer ſeems like "his own Jupiter in his terrors, ſhaking "Olympus, ſcattering the lightnings, and "firing the heavens. Virgil, like the ſame "power, in his benevolence, counſelling with "the Gods, laying plans for empires, and or-"dering his whole creation." Periods of this kind, when introduced with propriety, and not too frequently repeated, have a ſenſible and attractive beauty: but if ſuch a conſtruction be aimed at in all our ſentences, it betrays into a diſagreeable uniformity; and produces a regular jingle in the period, which tires the ear, and plainly diſcovers affectation.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

HARMONY.

HAVING treated of ſentences, with regard to their meaning, under the heads of Perſpicuity, Unity, and Strength; we will now conſider them with reſpect to their ſound, their harmony, or agreeableneſs to the ear.

In the harmony of periods two things are to be conſidered: Firſt, agreeable ſound, or modulation in general, without any particular expreſſion: Next, the ſound ſo ordered, as to become expreſſive of the ſenſe. The firſt is the more common; the ſecond, the ſuperior beauty.

The beauty of muſical conſtruction, it is evident, will depend upon the choice of words, and the arrangement of them. Thoſe words are moſt pleaſing to the ear, which are compoſed of ſmooth and liquid ſounds, where there is a proper intermixture of vowels and conſonants, without too many harſh conſonants rubbing againſt each other,

other, or too many open vowels in ſucceſſion, to produce a hiatus, or unpleaſing aperture of the mouth. Long words are generally more pleaſing to the ear than monoſyllables; and thoſe are the moſt muſical, which are not wholly compoſed of long or ſhort ſyllables, but of an intermixture of them; ſuch as, *delight*, *amuſe*, *velocity*, *celerity*, *beautiful*, *impetuoſity*. If the words, however, which compoſe a ſentence, be ever ſo well choſen and harmonious, yet, if they be unſkilfully arranged, its muſic is entirely loſt. As an inſtance of a muſical ſentence, we may take the following from Milton, in his Treatiſe on Education. "We ſhall conduct you "to a hill-ſide, laborious, indeed, at the firſt "aſcent; but elſe ſo ſmooth, ſo green, ſo full "of goodly proſpects and melodious ſounds on "every ſide, that the harp of Orpheus was not "more charming." Every thing in this ſentence conſpires to render it harmonious. The words are well choſen; *laborious*, *ſmooth*, *green*, *goodly*, *melodious*, *charming*; and beſides, they are ſo happily arranged, that no alteration could be made, without injuring the melody.

There-

There are two things on which the muſic of a ſentence principally depends: theſe are, the proper diſtribution of the ſeveral members of it, and the cloſe or cadence of the whole.

Firſt, we obſerve, that the diſtribution of the ſeveral members ſhould be carefully attended to. Whatever is eaſy and pleaſing to the organs of ſpeech, always ſounds grateful to the ear. While a period is going on, the termination of each of its members forms a pauſe in the pronunciation; and theſe pauſes ſhould be ſo diſtributed as to bear a certain muſical proportion to each other. This will be beſt illuſtrated by examples. The following paſſage is taken from Archbiſhop Tillotſon. "This diſcourſe concerning the "eaſineſs of God's commands does, all along, "ſuppoſe and acknowledge the difficulties of "the firſt entrance upon a religious courſe; "except, only in thoſe perſons who have had "the happineſs to be trained up to religion by "the eaſy and inſenſible degrees of a pious and "virtuous education." This ſentence is far from being harmonious; owing chiefly to this, that there is, properly, no more than one pauſe in it, falling between the two members into which

which it is divided; each of which is ſo long as to require a conſiderabie ſtretch of the breath in pronouncing it. Let us obſerve now, on the contrary, the grace of the following paſſage, from Sir William Temple, in which he ſpeaks ſarcaſtically of man. "But, God be thanked, "his pride is greater than his ignorance; and "what he wants in knowledge, he ſupplies by "ſufficiency. When he has looked about him, "as far as he can, he concludes there is no "more to be ſeen; when he is at the end of his "line, he is at the bottom of the ocean; when "he has ſhot his beſt, he is ſure none ever did, "or ever can, ſhoot better, or beyond it. His "own reaſon he holds to be the certain meaſure "of truth; and his own knowledge of what is "poſſible in nature." Here every thing is, at the ſame time, eaſy to the breath, and grateful to the ear. We muſt, however, obſerve, that if compoſition abounds with ſentences which have too many reſts, and theſe placed at intervals too apparently meaſured and regular, it is apt to ſavour of affectation.

The next thing which demands our attention is, the cloſe or cadence of the whole ſentence.

The

The only important rule which can here be given, is, that when we aim at dignity or elevation, the ſound ſhould increaſe to the laſt; the longeſt members of the period, and the fulleſt and moſt ſonorous words, ſhould be employed in the concluſion. As an inſtance of this, the following ſentence of Mr. Addiſon may be given. "It "fills the mind," ſpeaking of ſight, "with the "largeſt variety of ideas; converſes with its "objects at the greateſt diſtance; and continues "the longeſt in action without being tired or "ſatiated with its proper enjoyments." Here every reader muſt be ſenſible of a beauty, both in the juſt diviſion of the members and pauſes, and the manner in which the ſentence is rounded, and brought to a full and harmonious termination.

It may be remarked, that little words, in the concluſion of a ſentence, are as injurious to melody, as they are inconſiſtent with ſtrength of expreſſion. A muſical cloſe in our language ſeems, in general, to require either the laſt ſyllable, or the laſt but one, to be a long ſyllable. Words which conſiſt chiefly of ſhort ſyllables, as *contrary*, *particular*, *retroſpect*, ſeldom terminate

nate a ſentence harmoniouſly, unleſs a run of long ſyllables, before, has rendered them pleaſing to the ear.

Sentences, however, which are ſo conſtructed as to make the ſound always ſwell and grow towards the end, and to reſt either on a long or a penult long ſyllable, give a diſcourſe the tone of declamation. If melody be not varied, the ear ſoon becomes acquainted and cloyed with it. Sentences conſtructed in the ſame manner, with the pauſes at equal intervals, ſhould never ſucceed each other. Short ſentences muſt be blended with long and ſwelling ones, to render diſcourſe ſprightly, as well as magnificent.

We now proceed to treat of a higher ſpecies of harmony; the ſound adapted to the ſenſe. Of this we may remark two degrees: Firſt, the current of ſound ſuited to the tenor of a diſcourſe: Next, a peculiar reſemblance effected between ſome object and the ſounds that are employed in deſcribing it.

Sounds have, in many reſpects, an intimate correſpondence with our ideas; partly natural, partly produced by artificial aſſociations. Hence, any one modulation of ſound continued, ſtamps

on

on our ſtyle a certain cha.acter and expreſſion. Sentences conſtructed with the Ciceronian fulneſs and ſwell, excite an idea of what is important, magnificent, and ſedate. They ſuit, however, no violent paſſion, no eager reaſoning, no familiar addreſs. Theſe require meaſures briſker, eaſier, and more concife. It were as ridiculous to write a familiar epiſtle and a funeral oration in a ſtyle of the ſame cadence, as to ſet the words of a tender love-ſong to the tune of a warlike march.

Beſides that general correſpondence which the current of ſound has with the current of thought, a more particular expreſſion may be attempted, of certain objects, by reſembling ſounds. In poetry this reſemblance is chiefly to be looked for. It obtains ſometimes, indeed, in proſe compoſition; but there in a more faint and inferior degree.

The ſounds of words may be employed to deſcribe chiefly three claſſes of objects; firſt, other ſounds; ſecondly, motion; and thirdly, the emotions and paſſions of the mind.

In moſt languages it will be found, that the names of many particular ſounds are ſo formed

as

as to bear ſome reſemblance to the ſound which they ſignify; as with us, the *whiſtling* of winds, the *buzz* and *hum* of inſects, the *hiſs* of ſerpents, and the *craſh* of falling timber; and many other inſtances, where the word has been plainly conſtructed from the ſound it repreſents. A remarkable example of this beauty we ſhall produce from Milton, taken from two paſſages in his Paradiſe Loſt, deſcribing the ſound made in the one, by the opening of the gates of hell; in the other, by the opening of thoſe of heaven. The contraſt between the two, exhibits, to great advantage, the art of the poet. The firſt is the opening hell's gates:

——————On a ſudden, open fly,
With impetuous recoil, and jarring ſound,
Th' infernal doors; and on their hinges grate
Harſh thunder.——————

Obſerve the ſmoothneſs of the other:

——————Heaven opened wide
Her ever-during gates, harmonious ſound!
On golden hinges turning.——————

The ſecond claſs of objects, which the ſound of words is frequently employed to imitate, is motion; as it is ſwift or ſlow, violent or gentle,

uniform or interrupted, eaſy or accompanied with effort. Between ſound and motion there is no natural affinity; yet in the imagination there is a ſtrong one; as is evident from the connection between muſic and dancing. The poet can, conſequently, give us a lively idea of the kind of motion he would deſcribe, by the help of ſound, which correſpond, in our imagination, with that motion. Long ſyllables naturally excite the idea of ſlow motion; as in this line of Virgil:

Olli inter ſeſe magna vi brachia tollunt.

A ſucceſſion of ſhort ſyllables gives the impreſſion of quick motion: as,

Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus.

The works of Homer and Virgil abound with inſtances of this beauty; which are ſo often quoted, and ſo well known, that it is unneceſſary to produce them.

The third ſet of objects, which we mentioned the ſound of words as capable of repreſenting, conſiſts of the emotions and paſſions of the mind. Between ſenſe and ſound there appears, at firſt view, to be no natural reſemblance. But if the ar-

arrangement of ſyllables, by the ſound alone, calls forth one ſet of ideas more readily than another, and diſpoſes the mind for entering into that affection which the poet intends to raiſe, ſuch arrangement may, with propriety, be ſaid to reſemble the ſenſe, or be ſimilar and correſpondent to it. Thus when pleaſure, joy, and agreeable objects, are deſcribed by one who ſenſibly feels his ſubject, the language naturally runs into ſmooth, liquid, and flowing numbers.

——————— Namque ipſa decoram
Cæſariem nato genetrix, lumenque juventæ
Purpureum, et lætos oculis afflarat honores.
Æn. I.

Briſk and lively ſenſations excite quicker and more animated numbers.

——————— Juvenum manus emicat ardens
Littus in Heſperium. Æn. VII.

Melancholy and gloomy ſubjects are naturally connected with ſlow meaſures and long words.

In thoſe deep ſolitudes and awful cells,
Where heavenly penſive contemplation dwells.

Abundant inſtances of this kind will be ſuggeſted by a moderate acquaintance with the good poets, either ancient or modern.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

FIGURES may be defined to be that language which is ſuggeſted either by the imagination or by the paſſions. They are commonly divided by rhetoricians into two great claſſes, figures of words, and figures of thought. The former are generally called tropes, and conſiſt in a word's being uſed to ſignify ſomething that is different from its original meaning. Hence, if the word be altered, the figure is deſtroyed: Thus, for inſtance, "Light ariſeth to the up-"right in darkneſs." Here the trope conſiſts in "light and darkneſs" not being taken literally, but intended to expreſs comfort and adverſity: to which conditions of life they are ſuppoſed to bear ſome analogy or reſemblance. The other claſs, called figures of thought, ſuppoſes the figure to conſiſt in the ſentiment only, whilſt the words are uſed in their literal ſignification: as

in

in exclamations, interrogations, apoſtrophes, and compariſons; where, though the words be varied, or tranſlated from one language into another, the ſame figure, notwithſtanding, is ſtill preſerved. This diſtinction, however, is of ſmall importance, ſince practice cannot be aſſiſted by it; nor is it in itſelf always ſufficiently perſpicuous.

Tropes derive their origin, in ſome degree, from the barrenneſs of language, but more extenſively from the influence which the imagination poſſeſſes over every kind of ſpeech. The imagination never contemplates any one idea, as ſingle and alone, but as accompanied by other ideas, which may be conſidered as its acceſſories. Theſe acceſſories often operate more forcibly upon the mind than the principal idea itſelf. They are, perhaps, in their nature more agreeable; or more familiar to our conceptions: or remind us of a greater variety of important circumſtances. Hence the name of the acceſſory or correſpondent idea is employed; although the principal has a proper and well known name of its own. Thus, for example, when we deſign to point out the period at which a ſtate enjoyed

moſt reputation and glory, we might eaſily employ the proper words for expreſſing this; but as this, in our imagination, is readily connected with the flouriſhing period of a plant or tree, we prefer this correſpondent idea, and ſay, "The "Roman Empire flouriſhed moſt under Au- "guſtus." The leader of a faction, is a plain expreſſion; but, becauſe the head is the principal part of the human figure, and is conſidered as directing all the animal operations; from this reſemblance we figuratively ſay, "Catiline was "the head of his party."

We will now examine, why tropes or figures contribute to the beauty and grace of ſtyle. By them language is enriched, and becomes more copious. Hence words and phraſes are multiplied for expreſſing every ſpecies of ideas; for deſcribing even the ſmalleſt differences; the moſt delicate ſhades and colours of thought; which by proper words alone could not poſſibly have been expreſſed. They alſo give dignity to ſtyle, which is degraded by the familiarity of vulgar expreſſions. Figurative language has the ſame connection with an elevated ſubject, that a rich and ſplendid apparel has with a perſon of rank

and

and dignity. In proſe compoſitions, aſſiſtance of this kind is often requiſite; from poetry it is inſeparable: To ſay, "the ſun riſes," is trite and common; but it becomes a magnificent image, when expreſſed as Mr. Thomſon has done:

But yonder comes the powerful king of day
Rejoicing in the eaſt.———

Figures furniſh the pleaſure of enjoying two objects preſented, at the ſame time, to our view, without confuſion; the principal idea, together with its acceſſory, which gives it the figurative appearance. When, for example, inſtead of "youth," we ſay, "the morning of life;" the fancy is inſtantly entertained with all the correſponding circumſtances which occur between theſe two objects. At the ſame inſtant, we behold a certain period of human life, and a certain time of the day, ſo connected with each other, that the imagination plays between them with delight, and views at once two ſimilar objects, without embarraſsment or confuſion.

Beſides, figures are attended with this additional advantage; of affording a more clear and ſtriking view of the principal object, than could

be had if it were expreſſed in ſimple terms, and freed from its acceſſory idea. They communicate to the object on which they are employed, a pictureſque appearance; they can transform an abſtract conception, in ſome degree, into an object of ſenſe; they ſurround it with circumſtances, which enable the mind to lay hold of it ſteadily, and to contemplate it fully. By a well adapted figure, even conviction is aſſiſted, and a truth is impreſſed upon the mind with additional livelineſs and force. Thus, in the following paſſage of Dr. Young: "When we dip too "deep in pleaſure, we always ſtir a ſediment "that renders it impure and noxious." When an image preſents ſuch a reſemblance between a moral and a ſenſible idea, it ſerves, like an argument from analogy, to enforce what the author advances, and to produce conviction.

All tropes being founded on the relation which one object bears to another, the name of the one can be ſubſtituted for that of the other; and by this, the vivacity of the idea is generally intended to be increaſed. The relation between a cauſe and its effect, is one of the firſt and moſt obvious. Hence the cauſe is ſometimes figura-

tively

tively put for the effect. For inſtance, Mr. Addiſon, writing of Italy, ſays,

Bloſſoms, and fruits, and flowers, together riſe,
And the whole year in gay confuſion lies.

Here the "whole year" is plainly meant to ſignify the effects or produce of all the ſeaſons of the year. The effect is alſo often put for the cauſe; as "grey hairs" for "old age," which produces grey hairs; and "ſhade" for the "trees," which cauſe the ſhade. The relation which ſubſiſts between the container and the thing contained, is ſo intimate and apparent, as naturally to give riſe to tropes.

——— Ille impiger hauſit
Spumantem pateram, et pleno ſe proluit auro.

Where it is obvious, that the cup and gold, are put for the liquor that was contained in the golden cup. The name of a country is alſo uſed to ſignify its inhabitants. To pray for the aſſiſtance of Heaven is the ſame as to pray for the aſſiſtance of God, who is thought to reſide in Heaven. The relation between a ſign and the thing ſignified, is another ſource of tropes. Thus:

Cedant arma togæ; concedat laurea linguæ.

Here, the "toga," which is the badge of the civil profeſſions, and the "laurel," that of military honours, are each of them put for the civil and military characters themſelves. Tropes, which are founded on theſe ſeveral relations of cauſe and effect, container and contained, ſign and thing ſignified, are called by the name of metonymy.

When the trope is founded on the relation betwixt an antecedent and its conſequent, it is called a metalepſis; as when the Romans uſed to ſay, "fuit," or "vixit" to ſignify that one was dead. "Fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Teu-" "crum," expreſſes, that the glory of Troy is no more.

If the whole is put for a part, or a part for the whole; a genus for a ſpecies, or a ſpecies for a genus; the ſingular number for the plural, or the plural for the ſingular; in general, if any thing leſs, or any thing more, is ſubſtituted for the preciſe object meant, the figure is then termed a ſynecdoche. We ſay, for inſtance, "A fleet of ſo many ſail," in the place of "ſhips;" we frequently uſe the "head" for the "perſon," the "pole" for the "earth,"

the

the "waves" for the ſea." An attribute is often uſed for its ſubject; as "youth and beauty," for the "young and beautiful;" and ſometimes, a ſubject for its attribute. But it is unneceſſary to inſiſt longer on this enumeration. The Metaphor, which is founded on the relation of ſimilitude and reſemblance, which is by far the moſt fruitful of tropes, ſhall be conſidered in the next chapter.

METAPHOR.

METAPHOR is founded entirely on the reſemblance which one object bears to another. It is, therefore, nearly allied to ſimile or compariſon; and differs only from it in being expreſſed in a ſhorter form. When we ſay of a great miniſter, "that he upholds the ſtate, like "a pillar which ſupports the weight of a maſſy "edifice," we evidently make a compariſon; but when we ſay of ſuch a man, that he is, "the pillar of the ſtate," it becomes a metaphor.

Of all the figures of ſpeech, none approaches ſo near to painting as the metaphor. It gives light and ſtrength to deſcription; makes intellectual ideas, in ſome degree, viſible to the eye, by giving them colour, and ſubſtance, and ſenſible qualities. To produce this effect, however, a delicate care is requiſite; for, by a little inaccuracy, we may introduce confuſion, inſtead of promoting perſpicuity. Several rules, therefore, muſt be given for the proper management of metaphors.

The

The firſt which we ſhall mention is, that they be ſuited to the nature of the ſubject; neither too numerous, nor too gay, nor too elevated for it; that we neither endeavour to force the ſubject, by the uſe of them, into a degree of elevation which is not natural to it, nor, on the contrary, ſuffer it to fall below its proper dignity. Some metaphors are beautiful in poetry, which would be abſurd and unnatural in proſe; ſome are graceful in orations, which would be highly improper in hiſtorical or philoſophical compoſitions. Figures are, indeed, the dreſs of ſentiment. They ſhould, conſequently, be adapted to the character of that ſtyle which they are intended to adorn.

The ſecond rule reſpects the choice or objects, from whence metaphors are to be drawn. The field for figurative language is very extenſive. All nature opens its ſtores to us, and allows us to gather them without reſtraint. But care muſt be taken not to uſe ſuch alluſions as raiſe in the mind diſagreeable, mean, low, or unclean ideas. To render a metaphor perfect, it muſt not only be apt, but pleaſing; it muſt entertain as well as enlighten. Mr. Dryden, there-

fore

fore, can hardly eſcape the imputation of a very unpardonable breach of delicacy, when, in the dedication of his Juvenal, he obſerves to the Earl of Dorſet, that "ſome bad poems carry "their owners' marks about them---ſome brand "or other on this *buttock*, or that *ear*; that it "is notorious who are the owners of the cattle."

The moſt pleaſing metaphors are thoſe which are derived from the more frequent occurrences of art or nature, or the civil tranſactions and cuſtoms of mankind. Thus how expreſſive, yet at the ſame time how familiar, is that image which Otway has put into the mouth of Metellus, in his play of Caius Marius, where he calls Sulpicius

> That mad wild bull, whom Marius lets looſe
> On each occaſion, when he'd make Rome feel him,
> To toſs our laws and liberties i' th' air!

In the third place, a metaphor ſhould be founded on a reſemblance, which is clear and perſpicuous, and not on one which is far-fetched, or difficult to be diſcovered. Harſh or forced metaphors are always diſpleaſing, becauſe they perplex the reader; and inſtead of illuſtrating the thought, render it intricate and confuſed.

Thus,

Thus, for inſtance, Cowley, ſpeaking of his miſtreſs, expreſſes himſelf in the following forced and obſcure verſes.

Wo to her ſtubborn heart, if once mine come
Into the ſelf-ſame room,
'Twill tear and blow up all within,
Like a granada, ſhot into a magazine.
Then ſhall love keep the aſhes and torn parts
Of both our broken hearts;
Shall out of both one new one make;
From her's th' alloy, from mine the metal take;
For of her heart, he from the flames will find
But little left behind;
Mine only will remain entire;
No droſs was there to periſh in the fire.

Metaphors borrowed from any of the ſciences, eſpecially ſuch of them as belong to particular profeſſions, are almoſt continually faulty by their obſcurity.

In the fourth place, we muſt be careful never to jumble metaphorical and plain language together; never to conſtruct a period in ſuch a manner, that part of it muſt be underſtood metaphorically, part literally; which always introduces a moſt diſagreeable confuſion. Though the works of Oſſian abound with beautiful and

correct

correct metaphors, yet they afford an inſtance of the fault we are now cenſuring. " Trothal " went forth with the ſtream of his people, but " they met a rock; for Fingal ſtood unmoved; " broken they rolled back from his ſide: Nor " did they roll in ſafety; the ſpear of the king " purſued their flight." The metaphor, at the beginning, is exceedingly beautiful: The " ſtream," the unmoved rock," the " waves " rolling back broken," are expreſſions perfectly agreeable to the proper and conſiſtent language of figure; but in the concluſion, when we are told, " they did not roll in ſafety, be- " cauſe the ſpear of the king purſued their " flight," the literal meaning is injudiciouſly mixed with the metaphor; they are, at the ſame moment, repreſented as waves that *roll*, and as men that may be *purſued* and *wounded with a ſpear*.

In the fifth place, we muſt take care not to make two different metaphors meet on the ſame ſubject. This, which is called mixed metaphor, is one of the groſſeſt abuſes of this figure. Shakeſpeare's expreſſion, for example, " to take " arms againſt a ſea of troubles," makes a moſt un-

unnatural medley, and entirely confounds the imagination. More correct writers than Shakeſpeare are ſometimes guilty of this error. Mr. Addiſon, in one of his numbers in the Spectator, ſays, "There is not a ſingle view of human na-
"ture, which is not ſufficient to extinguiſh the
"ſeeds of pride." Here a *view* is made to *extinguiſh*, and to *extinguiſh ſeeds*.

In examining the propriety of metaphors, it ſeems to be a good rule, to form a picture upon them, and conſider how the parts would agree, and what kind of figure the whole would preſent, when delineated with a pencil.

Metaphors, in the ſixth place, ſhould not be crowded together on the ſame object. Though each of them be diſtinct, yet if they be heaped on one another, they produce confuſion. The following paſſage from Horace will exemplify this obſervation.

Motum ex Metello conſule civicum
Bellique cauſas, et vitiar et modos,
Ludumque fortunæ, graveſque
Principum amicitias, et arma
Nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus,
Periculoſæ plenum opus aleæ,
Tractas, et incedis per ignes
Suppoſitos cineri doloſo. L. 2. 1.

This paſſage, though highly poètical, is rendered harſh and obſcure by three diſtinct metaphors being crowded together: Firſt, "*arma* "*uncta cruoribus nondum expiatis*;" next, "*opus* "*plenum periculoſæ aleæ*;" and then, "*incedis* "*per ignes ſuppoſitos cinori doloſo.*"

The laſt rule which we ſhall ſuggeſt concerning metaphors, is, that they ſhould not be too far purſued. For when the reſemblance, which is the foundation of the figure, is long dwelt upon, and carried into all its minute circumſtances, an allegory is produced inſtead of a metaphor; the reader is wearied, and the diſcourſe becomes obſcure. This is termed ſtraining a metaphor. Doctor Young, whoſe imagination was more diſtinguiſhed by ſtrength than delicacy, is often guilty of running down his metaphors. Thus, ſpeaking of old age, he ſays, it ſhould

> Walk thoughtful on the ſilent ſolemn ſhore
> Of that vaſt ocean it muſt ſail ſo ſoon;
> And put good works on board; and wait the wind
> That ſhortly blows us into worlds unknown.

The two firſt lines are extremely beautiful; but when he continues the metaphor, by "put-

"ting

" ting good works on board, and waiting the " wind," it becomes ſtrained, and ſinks in dignity.

Having treated thus fully of the metaphor, we ſhall conclude this chapter with a few words concerning allegory.

An allegory is a continued metaphor; it is the repreſentation of one thing, by another which has a reſemblance to it. Thus Prior, in his Henry and Emma, makes Emma, in the following allegorical manner, deſcribe her conſtancy to Henry:

Did I but purpoſe to embark with thee
On the ſmooth ſurface of a ſummer's ſea,
While gentle zephyrs play with proſp'rous gales,
And fortune's favour fills the ſwelling ſails;
But would forſake the ſhip, and make the ſhore,
When the winds whiſtle, and the tempeſts roar?

The ſame rules that were given for metaphors, may be alſo applied to allegories, on account of the affinity which ſubſiſts between them. The only material difference, beſide the one being ſhort, and the other prolonged, is, that a metaphor always explains itſelf by the words that are connected with it, in their proper and natural

tural ſignification: As when we ſay, "Achilles "was a lion;" "an able miniſter is the pillar "of the ſtate." The lion and the pillar are here ſufficiently interpreted by the mention of Achilles and the miniſter, which are joined to them; but an allegory may be allowed to ſtand leſs connected with the literal meaning; the interpretation not being ſo plainly pointed out, but left to our own reflection.

HY-

HYPERBOLE—PERSONIFICATION—APOSTROPHE.

HYPERBOLE conſiſts in magnifying an object beyond its natural bounds. This figure occurs very frequently in all languages, and makes a part even of common converſation: As ſwift as the wind; as white as the ſnow; and the like; and our uſual forms of compliment are, in general, only extravagant hyperboles. Theſe exaggerated expreſſions, however, from habit, are ſeldom conſidered as hyperbolical.

Hyperboles are of two kinds; either ſuch as are employed in deſcription, or ſuch as are ſuggeſted by the ardour of paſſion. Thoſe are the beſt which are the effect of paſſion; ſince it not only gives riſe to the moſt daring figures, but often, at the ſame time, renders them natural and juſt. Hence the following paſſage in Milton, though extremely hyperbolical, contains nothing but what is natural and proper. It exhibits the mind of Satan agitated with rage and deſpair:

Me

Me miſerable! which way ſhall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite deſpair?
Which way I fly is Hell; myſelf am Hell;
And in the loweſt depth, a lower deep
Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,
To which the Hell I ſuffer ſeems a Heaven.

In ſimple deſcription hyperboles muſt be employed with greater caution. When an earthquake or a ſtorm is deſcribed, or when our imagination is carried into the midſt of a battle, we can bear ſtrong hyperboles without diſpleaſure. But when only a woman in grief is preſented to our view, it is impoſſible not to be diſguſted with ſuch wild exaggeration as the following in one of our dramatic poets:

——— I found her on the floor,
In all the ſtorm of grief, yet beautiful;
Pouring forth tears at ſuch a laviſh rate,
That, were the world on fire, they might have drown'd
The wrath of Heaven, and quench'd the mighty ruin.

This is the genuine bombaſt. The perſon herſelf who laboured under the diſtracting agitations of grief, might be permitted to expreſs herſelf in ſtrong hyperbole; but the ſpectator, who

who only ſpeaks the language of deſcription, cannot be permitted an equal liberty. The juſt boundary of this figure cannot be aſcertained by any preciſe rule. Good ſenſe and an accurate taſte muſt aſcertain the limit, beyond which, if it paſs, it becomes extravagant.

PERSO-

PERSONIFICATION.

WE proceed now to the examination of thoſe figures which lie altogether in the thought; where the words are taken in their common and literal ſenſe. We ſhall begin with perſonification, by which life and action are attributed to inanimate objects. All poetry, even in its moſt gentle and humble forms, is much indebted to this figure. From proſe it is by no means excluded; nay, even in common converſation frequent approaches are made to it. When we ſay, the earth *thirſts* for rain, or the fields *ſmile* with plenty; when ambition is ſaid to be *reſtleſs*, or a diſeaſe to be *deceitful*, ſuch expreſſions ſhew the facility with which the mind can accommodate the properties of living creatures to things that are inanimate, or to abſtract conceptions.

There are three different degrees of this figure; which it is requiſite to remark and diſtinguiſh, in order to determine the propriety of its

uſe.

uſe. The firſt is, when ſome of the properties or qualities of living creatures are aſcribed to inanimate objects; the ſecond, when thoſe inanimate objects are deſcribed as acting like ſuch as have life; and the third, when they are exhibited either as ſpeaking to us, or as liſtening to what we ſay to them.

The firſt and loweſt degree of this figure, which conſiſts in communicating to inanimate objects ſome of the qualities of living creatures, raiſes the ſtyle ſo little, that the humbleſt diſcourſe will admit it without any force. Thus, "a raging ſtorm, a deceitful diſeaſe, a cruel "diſaſter," are familiar and ſimple expreſſions. This, indeed is ſuch an obſcure degree of perſonification, as might not, perhaps, be improperly claſſed with plain metaphors, which almoſt eſcape our obſervation.

The ſecond degree of this figure is, when we repreſent inanimate objects acting like thoſe that have life. Here we advance a ſtep higher, and the perſonification becomes ſenſible. According to the nature of the action which we aſcribe to thoſe inanimate objects, and the particularity with which we deſcribe it, ſuch is the

ſtrength of the figure. When purſued to a conſiderable length, it belongs only to laboured harangues; when ſlightly touched, it may be admitted into leſs elevated compoſitions. Cicero, for example, ſpeaking of the caſes where killing a man is lawful in ſelf-defence, uſes the following expreſſions: "*Aliquando nobis gladius ad* "*occidendum hominem ab ipſis porrigitur legibus.*" Here the laws are beautifully perſonified, as ſtretching forth their hand to give us a ſword for putting a man to death.

In poetry, perſonifications of this kind are extremely frequent, and, indeed, conſtitute its eſſence. In the deſcriptions of a poet who has a lively fancy, every thing becomes animated. Homer, the father of poetry, is remarkable for the uſe of this figure. War, peace, darts, rivers, every thing, in ſhort, is alive in his writings. Milton and Shakeſpeare reſemble him in this particular. No perſonification is more ſtriking, or introduced on a more proper occaſion, than the following of Milton, upon Eve's eating the forbidden fruit:

So ſaying, her raſh hand, in evil hour,
Forth reaching to the fruit, ſhe pluck'd, ſhe eat;
Earth felt the wound, and nature, from her ſeat
Sighing, thro' all her works gave ſigns of woe,
That all was loſt.

B. ix. l. 780.

The third and higheſt degree of this figure is yet to be mentioned; when inanimate objects are repreſented not only as feeling and acting, but as ſpeaking to us, or hearing and attending when we addreſs ourſelves to them. This is the boldeſt of all rhetorical figures; it is the ſtyle of ſtrong paſſion only; and, conſequently, ſhould never be attempted, except when the mind is very much heated and agitated. Milton affords us a very beautiful example of this figure, in that moving and tender addreſs which Eve makes to Paradiſe, immediately before ſhe is compelled to leave it:

Oh! unexpected ſtroke, worſe than of death.
Muſt I thus leave thee, Paradiſe! thus leave
Thee, native ſoil, theſe happy walks and ſhades,
Fit haunt of Gods! where I had hopes to ſpend
Quiet, though ſad, the reſpite of that day
Which muſt be mortal to us both. O flowers!
That never will in other climate grow,
My early viſitation, and my laſt

At ev'n, which I bred up with tender hand,
From your firſt op'ning buds, and gave you names!
Who now ſhall rear you to the ſun, or rank
Your tribes, and water from the ambroſial fount?

B. ii. l. 268.

This the real language of nature, and of female paſſion.

In the management of this ſort of perſonification two rules are to be obſerved. Firſt, never to attempt it unleſs prompted by ſtrong paſſion, and never to continue it when the paſſion begins to ſubſide. The ſecond rule is, never to perſonify an object which has not ſome dignity in itſelf, and which is incapable of making a proper figure in the elevation to which we raiſe it. To addreſs the body of a deceaſed friend, is natural; but to addreſs the clothes which he wore, introduces low and degrading ideas. So likewiſe, addreſſing the ſeveral parts of one's body, as if they were animated, is not agreeable to the dignity of paſſion. For this reaſon, the following paſſage in Mr. Pope's Eloiſa to Abelard is liable to cenſure:

Dear fatal name! reſt ever unreveal'd,
Nor paſs theſe lips in holy ſilence ſeal'd.

Hide

Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mix'd with Gods, his lov'd idea lies;
O! write it not, my hand!—his name appears
Already written—blot it out, my tears!

Here the name of Abelard is first personified; which, as the name of a person often stands for the person himself, is exposed to no objection: Next, Eloisa personifies her own heart; and as the heart is a dignified part of the human frame, and is often put for the mind or affections, this also may pass without censure. But when she addresses her hand, and tells it not to write his name, this is strained and unnatural. Yet the figure becomes still worse, when she exhorts her tears to blot out what her hand had written. The two last lines are, indeed, altogether unsuitable to the native passion and tenderness which breathe through the rest of that inimitable poem.

APOSTROPHE.

APOSTROPHE is an addreſs to a real perſon; but one who is either abſent or dead, as if he were preſent, and attentive to us. This figure is, in boldneſs, a degree lower than the addreſs to perſonified objects; ſince it requires a leſs effort of imagination to ſuppoſe perſons preſent who are dead or abſent, than to animate inſenſible beings, and direct our diſcourſe to them. The poems of Oſſian abound with the moſt beautiful inſtances of this figure.

" Weep on the rocks of roaring winds, O Maid
" of Iniſtore! Bend thy fair head over the
" waves, thou fairer than the ghoſt of the hills,
" when it moves in a ſun-beam at noon over
" the ſilence of Morven! He is fallen! Thy
" youth is low; pale beneath the ſword of Cu-
" chullin!"

COMPARISON, ANTITHESIS, INTERROGATION, EXCLAMATION, AND OTHER FIGURES OF SPEECH.

A Compariſon or ſimile is, when the reſemblance between two objects is expreſſed in form, and uſually purſued more fully than the nature of a metaphor admits: As when we ſay, "The actions of princes are like thoſe great "rivers, the courſe of which every one beholds, "but their ſprings have been ſeen by few." This ſhort inſtance will ſhew, that a fortunate compariſon is a ſort of ſparkling ornament, which adds luſtre and beauty to language.

All compariſons may be reduced under two heads; *explaining and embelliſhing* compariſons. For when a writer compares the object of which he treats with any other thing, it always is, or at leaſt ought to be, with a view either to make us underſtand that object more clearly, or to render it more pleaſing and engaging. Even the moſt abſtract reaſoning admits of explaining

comparisons. For instance, the distinction between the powers of sense and imagination in the human mind, are, in Mr. Harris's Hermes, illustrated by a simile, in the following manner: "As wax," says he, "would not be adequate "to the purpose of signature, if it had not the "power to retain as well as to receive the im- "pression; the same holds of the soul with re- "spect to sense and imagination. Sense is its "receptive power, and imagination its reten- "tive. Had it sense without imagination, it "would not be as wax, but as water; where, "though all impressions be instantly made, yet "as soon as they are made, they are instantly "lost." In comparisons of this kind, perspicuity and usefulness are chiefly to be studied.

But embellishing comparisons, which are introduced to adorn the subject of which we treat, are those which most frequently occur. Resemblance, it has been observed, is the foundation of this figure. Yet resemblance must not be taken, in too strict a sense, for actual similitude or likeness of appearance. Two objects may raise a train of similar or concordant ideas in the mind, though they resemble each other

strictly

ſtrictly ſpeaking, in nothing. For example, to deſcribe the nature of ſoft and melancholy muſic, Oſſian ſays, "The muſic of Carryl was, like "the memory of joys that are paſt, pleaſant and "mournful to the ſoul." This is juſt and beautiful; yet no kind of muſic bears any reſemblance to a feeling of the mind, ſuch as the memory of paſt joys.

We will now conſider when compariſons may be introduced with propriety. Sińce they are the language of imagination rather than of paſſion, an author can hardly commit a greater fault, than in the midſt of paſſion to introduce a ſimile. Our writers of tragedies are often culpable in this reſpect. Thus Mr. Addiſon, in his Cato, makes Portius, juſt after Lucia had bid him farewell for ever, expreſs himſelf in a ſtudied and affected compariſon.

Thus, o'er the dying lamp th' unſteady flame
Hangs quiv'ring on a point, leaps off by fits,
And falls again, as loth to quit its hold.
Thou muſt not go; my ſoul ſtill hovers o'er thee,
And can't get looſe.

Though compariſon be not the ſtyle of ſtrong paſſion, ſo neither, when deſigned as an embel-

liſhment, is it the language of a mind totally unmoved. Being a figure of dignity, it always demands ſome elevation in the ſubject, to make it proper. It ſuppoſes the imagination to be uncommonly enlivened, though the heart be not agitated by paſſion. The language of ſimile ſeems to lie between the highly pathetic and the very humble ſtyle, at the ſame diſtance from each. It is, however, a ſparkling ornament; and muſt conſequently dazzle and fatigue, if it ſhould recur too often. Similes ſhould, even in poetry, be employed with moderation; but, in proſe, much more; otherwiſe the ſtyle will grow diſguſtingly luſcious, and the ornament loſe its beauty and effect.

We will now conſider the nature of thoſe objects from which compariſons ſhould be drawn; ſuppoſing them introduced in their proper order.

In the firſt place, they muſt not be drawn from things which have too intimate and obvious a reſemblance to the object with which they are compared. The pleaſure which we receive from the act of comparing, ariſes from the diſcovery of likeneſſes among things of different

ſpecies,

ſpecies, where we ſhould not, at firſt ſight, expect a reſemblance.

But, in the ſecond place, as compariſons ought not to be founded on likeneſſes too apparent, much leſs ought they to be founded on thoſe which are too faint and diſtant. Theſe, inſtead of aſſiſting, ſtrain the fancy, to comprehend them, and throw no light upon the ſubject.

In the third place, the object from which a compariſon is drawn ought never to be an unknown object, or one of which few people can have a clear idea. Similes, therefore, founded on philoſophical diſcoveries, or on any thing with which perſons of a particular trade only, or a particular profeſſion, are acquainted, produce not their proper effect. They ſhould be drawn from thoſe illuſtrious and noted objects, which the generality of readers have either ſeen, or can ſtrongly conceive.

In the fourth place, we muſt obſerve, that in compoſitions of a grave or elevated kind, ſimiles ſhould never be drawn from low or mean objects. Theſe have a tendency to degrade and vilify; whereas ſimiles are generally intended

to embelliſh and to dignify; and, therefore, except in burleſque writings, or where an object is meant to be diminiſhed, mean ideas ſhould never be ſubmitted to our obſervation.

ANTI-

ANTITHESIS.

ANTITHESIS is founded on the contraſt or oppoſition of two objects. By contraſt, objects oppoſed to each other appear in a ſtronger light. Beauty, for inſtance, never appears ſo charming as when contraſted with uglineſs and deformity. Antitheſis, therefore, may, on many occaſions, be uſed advantageouſly, to ſtrengthen the impreſſion which we propoſe that any object ſhould make. Thus Cicero, in his defence of Milo, repreſenting the improbability of Milo's attempting to take away the life of Clodius, when every thing was unfavourable to ſuch a deſign, after he had omitted many opportunities of effecting ſuch a purpoſe, heightens our conviction of this improbability, by a judicious uſe of this figure: " *Quem igitur cum omnium gra-*
" *tiâ interficere noluit, hunc voluit cum aliquorum*
" *querelâ? Quem jure, quem loco, quem tempo-*
" *re, quem impune, non eſt auſus, hunc injuriâ,*
" *iniquo loco, alieno tempore, periculo capitis,*

" *non*

"*non dubitavit occidere?*" Here the antitheſis is rendered complete, by the words and members of the ſentence, expreſſing the contraſted objects, being ſimilarly conſtructed, and made to correſpond to each other.

We muſt, however, acknowledge, that the frequent uſe of antitheſis, particularly where the oppoſition in the words is nice and quaint, is apt to make ſtyle unpleaſing. A maxim, or moral ſaying, very properly receives this form; both becauſe it is ſuppoſed to be the effect of meditation, and is deſigned to be engraven on the memory, which recalls it more eaſily by the aid of ſuch contraſted expreſſions. But where a number of ſuch ſentences ſucceed each other; where this is an author's favourite and prevailing mode of expreſſion, his ſtyle is expoſed to cenſure.

INTER-

INTERROGATION AND EXCLAMATION.

INTERROGATIONS and Exclamations are paſſionate figures. The literal uſe of interrogation is to aſk a queſtion; but when men are prompted by paſſion, whatever they would affirm or deny with great earneſtneſs, they naturally put in the form of a queſtion; expreſſing thereby the firmeſt confidence of the truth of their own opinion; and appealing to their hearers for the impoſſibility of the contrary. Thus, in ſcripture: "God is not a man, that "he ſhould lie; neither the ſon of man, that "he ſhould repent. Hath he ſaid it? And "ſhall he not do it? Hath he ſpoken it? And "ſhall he not make it good?"

Interrogations may be employed in the proſecution of ſome cloſe and earneſt reaſoning; but exclamations belong only to ſtronger emotions of the mind; to ſurpriſe, anger, joy, grief, and the like. Theſe being natural ſigns

of

of a moved and agitated mind, always, when they are properly employed, make us ſympathiſe with thoſe who uſe them, and enter into their feelings. Nothing, however, has a worſe effect than the frequent and unſeaſonable uſe of exclamations. Young, unexperienced writers ſuppoſe, that by pouring them forth plenteouſly, they render their compoſitions warm and animated. But quite the contrary is the caſe. They render them frigid to exceſs. When an author is always calling upon us to enter into tranſports which he has ſaid nothing to inſpire, he excites our diſguſt and indignation.

VISION.

VISION.

ANOTHER figure of ſpeech, fit only for animated compoſition, is what ſome writers call Viſion; when, inſtead of relating ſomething that is paſt, we uſe the preſent tenſe, and deſcribe it as if paſſing immediately before our eyes. Thus Cicero, in his fourth oration againſt Catiline: "*Videor enim mihi hanc urbem* "*videre, lucem orbis terrarum atque arcem om-* "*nium gentium, ſubito uno incendio concidentem* "*cerno animo ſepulta in patria miſeros atque in-* "*ſepultos acervos civium; verſatur mihi ante* "*oculos aſpectus Cethegi, et furor, in veſtrâ* "*cæde bacchantis.*" This figure has great beauty when it is well executed, and when it flows from the true ſpirit of genuine enthuſiaſm. If it be ſuggeſted by affection, it ſhares the ſame fate with all feeble attempts towards paſſionate figures; that of throwing ridicule upon the author, and leaving the reader more cool and unintereſted than he was before.

CLIMAX.

CLIMAX.

THE laſt figure which we ſhall mention, and which is of frequent uſe among all public ſpeakers, is called a Climax. It conſiſts in an artful exaggeration of all the circumſtances of ſome object or action which we wiſh to place in a ſtrong light. It operates by a gradual riſe of one circumſtance above another, till our idea be raiſed to the higheſt pitch. We ſhall give an inſtance of this figure, from a printed pleading of a celebrated Scotch Lawyer, Sir George Mackenzie. It is in a charge to the jury, in the caſe of a woman who was accuſed of murdering her own child. "Gentlemen, "if one man had any how ſlain another; if an "adverſary had killed his oppoſer; or a woman "occaſioned the death of her enemy; even "theſe criminals would have been capitally "puniſhed by the Cornelian law: But, if this "guiltleſs infant, who could make no enemy, "had been murdered by its own nurſe, what

"puniſh-

" punishments would not then the mother have
" demanded? With what cries and exclama-
" tions would she have stunned your ears?
" What shall we say then, when a woman,
" guilty of homicide, a mother, of the murder
" of her innocent child, hath comprised all
" those misdeeds in one single crime; a crime,
" in its own nature, detestable; in a woman,
" prodigious; in a mother, incredible; and
" perpetrated against one whose age called for
" compassion, whose near relation claimed af-
" fection, and whose innocence deserved the
" highest favour?" Such regular climaxes as these, though they have great beauty, yet, at the same time, have the appearance of art and study; and, consequently, though they may be admitted into formal harangues, yet they are not the language of passion, which seldom proceeds by such regular and measured steps.

GENERAL

GENERAL CHARACTERS OF STYLE. DIFFUSE, CONCISE, FEEBLE, NERVOUS, DRY, PLAIN, NEAT, ELEGANT, FLOWERY.

THAT different ſubjects ought to be treated in different kinds of ſtyle, is a poſition ſo ſelf-evident, that it requires not illuſtration. Every one is convinced, that treatiſes of philoſophy ſhould not be compoſed in the ſame ſtyle with orations. It is equally apparent, that different parts of the ſame compoſition require a variation in the ſtyle and manner. Yet amidſt this variety, we ſtill expect to find, in the compoſition of any one man, ſome degree of uniformity or conſiſtency with himſelf, in manner; we expect to find ſome prevailing character of ſtyle impreſſed on all his writings, which ſhall be ſuited to, and ſhall diſtinguiſh, his particular genius and turn of mind. The orations in Livy differ conſiderably in ſtyle, as they ought to do, from the reſt of his hiſtory. The ſame thing

may

may be obſerved in thoſe of Tacitus. Yet in the orations of both theſe elegant hiſtorians, the diſtinguiſhing manner of each may be clearly traced; the ſplendid fulneſs of the one, and the ſententious brevity of the other. Wherever there is real and native genius, it prompts a diſpoſition to one kind of ſtyle rather than to another. Where this is wanting; where there is no marked nor peculiar character which appears in the compoſitions of an author, we are apt to conclude, and not without cauſe, that he is a vulgar and trivial author, who writes from imitation, and not from the impulſe of original genius.

One of the firſt and moſt obvious diſtinctions of the different ſorts of ſtyle, ariſes from an author's expanding his thoughts more or leſs. The diſtinction conſtitutes what are termed the diffuſe and conciſe ſtyles. A conciſe writer compreſſes his ideas into the feweſt words; he employs none but the moſt expreſſive; he lops off all thoſe which are not a material addition to the ſenſe. Whatever ornament he admits, is adopted for the ſake of force, rather than of grace. The ſame thought is never repeated.

The

The utmoſt preciſion is ſtudied in his ſentences; and they are generally deſigned to ſuggeſt more to the reader's imagination than they immediately expreſs.

A diffuſe writer unfolds his idea fully. He holds it out in a variety of lights, and aſſiſts the reader, as much as poſſible, in comprehending it completely. He is not very anxious to expreſs it at firſt in its full ſtrength, becauſe he intends repeating the impreſſion; and what he wants in ſtrength, he endeavours to ſupply by copiouſneſs. His periods naturally flow into ſome length; and having room for ornament of every kind, he gives it free admittance.

Each of theſe ſtyles has its peculiar advantages; and each becomes faulty when carried to the extreme. Of conciſeneſs carried as far as propriety will allow, perhaps in ſome caſes farther, Tacitus the hiſtorian, and Monteſquieu, in "l'Eſprit de Loix," are remarkable examples. Of a beautiful and magnificent diffuſeneſs, Cicero is, undoubtedly, the nobleſt inſtance which can be given. Addiſon alſo, and Sir William Temple, may be ranked in ſome degree under the ſame claſs.

To determine when to adopt the conciſe, and when the diffuſe manner, we muſt be guided by the nature of the compoſition. Diſcourſes which are to be ſpoken, require a more diffuſe ſtyle than books which are to be read. In written compoſitions, a proper degree of conciſeneſs has great advantages. It is more lively; keeps up attention; makes a ſtronger impreſſion on the mind; and gratifies the reader by ſupplying more exerciſe to his conception. Deſcription, when we wiſh to have it vivid and animated, ſhould be in a conciſe ſtrain. Any redundant words or circumſtances encumber the fancy, and render the object we preſent to it confuſed and indiſtinct. The ſtrength and vivacity of deſcription, whether in proſe or poetry, depend much more upon the happy choice of one or two important circumſtances, than upon the multiplication of them. When we deſire to ſtrike the fancy, or to move the heart, we ſhould be conciſe; when to inform the underſtanding, which is more deliberate in its motions, and wants the aſſiſtance of a guide, it is better to be full. Hiſtorical narration may be beautiful, either in a conciſe or a diffuſe manner, according

ing to the author's genius. Livy and Herodotus are diffuſe; Thucydides and Salluſt are conciſe; yet they are all agreeable.

The nervous and the feeble are generally conſidered as characters of ſtyle, of the ſame import with the conciſe and the diffuſe. They do, indeed, very frequently coincide; yet this does not always hold; ſince there are inſtances of writers, who, in the midſt of a full and ample ſtyle, have maintained a conſiderable degree of ſtrength. Livy is an inſtance of the truth of this obſervation. The foundation, indeed, of a nervous or weak ſtyle, is laid in an author's manner of thinking: If he conceives an object forcibly, he will expreſs it with ſtrength; but if he has an indiſtinct view of his ſubject, this will clearly appear in his ſtyle. Unmeaning words and looſe epithets will eſcape him; his expreſſions will be vague and general; his arrangement indiſtinct and weak; and our conception of his meaning will be faint and coufuſed. But a nervous writer, be his ſtyle conciſe or extended, gives us always a ſtrong idea of his meaning; his mind being full of his ſubject, his words are, conſequently, all expreſſive;

every

every phraſe and every figure which he uſes, renders the picture which he would ſet before us, more ſtriking and compleat.

It muſt, however, be obſerved, that too great a ſtudy of ſtrength, to the neglect of the other qualities of ſtyle, is apt to betray writers into a harſh manner. Harſhneſs proceeds from uncommon words, from forced inverſions in the conſtruction of a ſentence, and too great a neglect of ſmoothneſs and eaſe. This is imputed as a fault to ſome of our earlieſt Claſſics in the Engliſh language; ſuch as Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Bacon, Hooker, Harrington, Cudworth, and other writers of conſiderable reputation in the days of Queen Elizabeth, James I. and Charles I. Theſe writers had nerves and ſtrength in a conſiderable degree; and are to this day diſtinguiſhed by that quality in ſtyle. But the language, in their hands, was very different from what it is at preſent, and was, indeed, entirely formed upon the idiom and conſtruction of the Latin, in the arrangement of ſentences. The preſent form which the language has aſſumed, has, in ſome degree, ſacrificed the ſtudy of ſtrength to that of eaſe and

perſpicuity. Our arrangement has become leſs forcible, perhaps, but more plain and natural; and this is now conſidered as the genius of our tongue.

Hitherto ſtyle has been conſidered under thoſe characters which regard its expreſſiveneſs of an author's meaning: We will now conſider it in another view, with reſpect to the degree of ornament employed to embelliſh it. Here the ſtyle of different authors ſeems to riſe in the following gradation: A dry, a plain, a neat, an elegant, a flowery, manner. Of theſe we will treat briefly, in the order in which they ſtand.

A dry manner excludes every kind of ornament. Satisfied with being underſtood, it aims not to pleaſe, in the leaſt degree, either the fancy or the ear. This is tolerable only in pure didactic writing; and even there to make us bear it, great ſolidity of matter is neceſſary, and entire perſpicuity of language.

A plain ſtyle advances one degree above a dry one. A writer of this character employs very little ornament of any kind, and reſts almoſt entirely upon his ſenſe. But, though he does not engage us by the arts of compoſition, he avoids

diſ-

diſguſting us like a dry and a harſh writer. Beſides perſpicuity, he obſerves propriety, purity, and preciſion in his language; which form no inconſiderable degree of beauty. Livelineſs and force are alſo compatible with a plain ſtyle; and conſequently, ſuch an author, if his ſentiments be good, may be ſufficiently agreeable. The difference between a dry and a plain writer is, that the former is incapable of ornament; the latter goes not in purſuit of it. Of thoſe who have employed the plain ſtyle, Dean Swift is an eminent example.

A neat ſtyle is next in order; and here we are advanced into the region of ornament; but that ornament is not of the moſt ſparkling kind. A writer of this character ſhews that he does not deſpiſe the beauty of language, by his attention to the choice of his words, and to their graceful collocation. His ſentences are always free from the incumbrance of ſuperfluous words; are of a moderate length; rather inclining to brevity than a ſwelling ſtructure; and cloſing with propriety. There is variety in his cadence; but no appearance of ſtudied harmony. His figures, if any, are ſhort and accurate, rather than bold

and glowing. Such a ſtyle may be attained by by a writer whoſe powers of fancy or genius are not extenſive, by induſtry and attention. This ſort of ſtyle is not unſuitable to any ſubject whatever. A familiar epiſtle, or a law paper, on the drieſt ſubject, may be compoſed with neatneſs; and a ſermon, or a philoſophical treatiſe, in a neat ſtyle, will be read with ſatisfaction.

An elegant ſtyle admits a higher degree of ornament than a neat one; and poſſeſſes all the virtues of ornament, without any of its exceſſes or defects. Complete elegance implies great perſpicuity and propriety; purity in the choice of words; and carefulneſs and ſkill in their harmonious and happy arrangement. It implies farther, the beauty of imagination ſpread over ſtyle, as far as the ſubject allows it; and all the illuſtration which figurative language affords when properly employed. An elegant writer, in ſhort, is one who delights the fancy and the ear, while he informs the underſtanding; and who clothes his ideas with all the beauty of expreſſion, but does not overload them with any of its miſplaced finery.

A florid

A florid ſtyle comprehends the exceſs of ornament. This, in a young compoſer, is not only pardonable, but is often a ſymptom of a bold and inventive genius. But, although it may be allowed to youth, in their firſt attempts, it muſt not receive the ſame indulgence from writers of more experience. In them, judgment ſhould chaſten imagination, and reject every ornament which is unſuitable or redundant. That tinſel ſplendour of language, which ſome writers perpetually affect, is truly contemptible. With theſe it is a luxuriancy of words, not of fancy. They forget that, unleſs it be founded on ſenſe and ſolid thought, the moſt florid ſtyle is but a childiſh impoſition on ignorant and unthinking readers.

STYLE—SIMPLE; AFFECTED; VEHEMENT—DIRECTIONS FOR FORMING A PROPER STYLE.

SIMPLICITY, applied to writing, is a term very commonly uſed; but, like many other critical terms, it is often uſed vaguely, and without preciſion. The different meanings given to the word ſimplicity, have been the chief cauſe of this inaccuracy. It will not, therefore, be improper to make a diſtinction between them; and ſhew in what ſenſe ſimplicity is a proper attribute of ſtyle. There are four different acceptations in which this term is taken.

The firſt is ſimplicity of compoſition, which is oppoſed to too great a variety of parts. This is the ſimplicity of plan in a tragedy, as diſtinguiſhed from double plots, and crowded incidents; the ſimplicity of the Iliad, in oppoſition to the digreſſions of Lucan; the ſimplicity of Grecian architecture, in oppoſition to the irregularity of the Gothic. Simplicity, in this ſenſe, is the ſame as unity. The

The ſecond ſenſe, is ſimplicity of thought, in oppoſition to refinement. Simple thoughts are thoſe which flow naturally; which are eaſily ſuggeſted by the ſubject or occaſion; and which, when once ſuggeſted, are univerſally underſtood. Refinement in writing, means a leſs obvious and natural turn of thought, which, when carried too far, approaches to intricacy, and is unpleaſing, by the appearance of being far ſought. Thus we ſhould ſay, that Mr. Parnell is a poet of much greater ſimplicity, in his turn of thought, than Mr. Cowley.

A third ſenſe of ſimplicity, is that in which it regards ſtyle; is oppoſed to too much ornament, or pomp of language. Thus we ſay, Mr. Locke is a ſimple, Mr. Hervey a florid, writer.

There is a fourth ſenſe of ſimplicity, which alſo reſpects ſtyle: but it regards not ſo much the degree of ornament employed, as the eaſy and natural manner in which language is expreſſive of our thoughts. In this ſenſe, ſimplicity is compatible with the higheſt ornament. Homer, for example, has this ſimplicity in the greateſt perfection; and yet no writer poſſeſſes

more ornament and beauty. This ſimplicity, which is now the object of our conſideration, ſtands oppoſed, not to ornament, but to affectation of ornament; and is a ſuperior excellency in compoſition.

A writer who has attained ſimplicity, has no marks of art in his expreſſion; it appears the very language of nature. We ſee not the writer and his labour, but the man in his own natural character. He may poſſeſs richneſs of expreſſion; he may be full of figures and of fancy; but theſe flow from him without difficulty; and he ſeems to write in this manner, not becauſe he has ſtudied it but becauſe it is the mode of expreſſion moſt familiar and eaſy to him. With this character of ſtyle, a certain degree of negligence is not inconſiſtent, nor even ungraceful; for too accurate an attention to words is foreign to it. Simplicity of ſtyle poſſeſſes this conſiderable advantage, that, like ſimplicity of manners, it ſhews us a man's ſentiments and turn of mind laid open without diſguiſe. A more ſtudied and artificial mode of writing, however beautiful, has always this diſadvantage, that it exhibits an author in form, like a man at court, where the

ſplen-

ſplendour of dreſs, and the ceremonial of behaviour, conceal thoſe peculiarities which diſtinguiſh one individual from another. But reading an author of ſimplicity, is like converſing with a perſon of rank at home, and with eaſe, where we ſee his natural manners and his real character.

With regard to ſimplicity, in general, we may obſerve, that the ancient original writers are always the moſt eminent for it. This proceeds from a very obvious cauſe, that they wrote from the dictates of natural genius, and were not formed upon the labours and writings of others.

Of affectation in ſtyle, which is oppoſed to ſimplicity, we have a remarkable inſtance in our language. Lord Shafteſbury, though an author of conſiderable merit, can expreſs nothing with ſimplicity. He ſeems to have conſidered it as vulgar, and beneath the dignity of a man of faſhion, to ſpeak like other men. Hence, he is perpetually in buſkins; replete with circumlocutions and artificial elegance. In every ſentence, the marks of labour are viſible; no appearance of that eaſe, which expreſſes a ſentiment coming natural and warm from the heart. He abounds with figures and ornament of every kind; is

ſometimes happy in them; but his fondneſs for them is too conſpicuous; and having once ſeized ſome metaphor or alluſion that pleaſed him, he knows not how to part with it. He poſſeſſed delicacy and refinement of taſte, to a degree that may be called exceſſive and ſickly; but he had little warmth of paſſion; and the coldneſs of his character ſuggeſted that artificial and ſtately manner which appears in his writings. No author is more dangerous to the tribe of imitators than Shafteſbury, who, amidſt ſeveral very conſiderable blemiſhes, has, at the ſame time, many dazzling and impoſing beauties.

It is very poſſible, however, for an author to write with ſimplicity, and yet to be deſtitute of beauty. He may be free from affectation, and not have merit. The beautiful ſimplicity ſuppoſes an author in poſſeſſion of real genius; and capable of writing with ſolidity, purity, and brilliancy of imagination. In this caſe, the ſimplicity of his manner is the crowning ornament: it gives luſtre to every other beauty; it is the dreſs of nature, without which all beauties are but imperfect. But if the mere abſence of affectation were ſufficient to conſtitute the beauty of

ſtyle,

ſtyle, weak and dull writers might often have pretenſions to it. A diſtinction, therefore, muſt be made, between that ſimplicity which accompanies true genius, and which is entirely compatible with every proper ornament of ſtyle, and that which is the effect only of careleſsneſs and inattention.

Another character of ſtyle, different from thoſe which have been already mentioned, is the vehement. This always ſuppoſes ſtrength; and is not, in any reſpect, incompatible with ſimplicity. It is diſtinguiſhed by a peculiar ardour; it is the language of a man whoſe imagination and paſſions are glowing and impetuous. With a negligence of leſſer graces, he pours himſelf forth with the rapidity and plentitude of a torrent. The vehement belongs to the higher kinds of oratory; and is rather expected from a man who is ſpeaking, than from one who is writing in his cloſet. Demoſthenes is the moſt full and perfect example of this ſpecies of ſtyle.

Having determined and explained the different characters of ſtyle, we ſhall conclude our obſervations with a few directions for the attainment of excellence in writing.

The firſt direction proper to be obſerved, is, to ſtudy clear ideas on the ſubject concerning which we are to write or to ſpeak. What we conceive clearly and feel ſtrongly, we ſhall naturally expreſs with clearneſs and with ſtrength. We ſhould, therefore, think cloſely on the ſubject, till we have attained a full and diſtinct view of the matter which we are to clothe in words; till we become warm and intereſted in it; then, and then only, ſhall we find a proper expreſſion begin to flow

In the ſecond place, to the acquiſition of a good ſtyle, the frequency of compoſing is indiſpenſibly requiſite. But it is not every kind of compoſing which will improve ſtyle. By a careleſs and haſty habit of writing, a bad ſtyle will be acquired; more trouble will afterwards be neceſſary to unlearn faults, and correct negligence, than to endeavour, from a ſtate of entire ignorance, to become acquainted with the firſt rudiments of compoſition. In the beginning, therefore, we ought to write with deliberation and with care. Facility and ſpeed are the fruit of practice and experience. We muſt be cautious, however, not to retard the courſe of thought,

nor

nor cool the ardour of imagination, by pauſing too long on every word we employ. On certain occaſions, there is a glow of compoſition which muſt be kept up, if we expect to expreſs ourſelves happily, though at the expence of ſome inaccuracies. A more ſevere examination muſt be the work of correction. What we have written, ſhould be laid by for ſome time, till the ardour of compoſition be ſubſided; till the partiality for our expreſſions be weakened, and the expreſſions themſelves be forgotten; and then examining our work with a cool and critical eye, as if it were the performance of another, we ſhall diſcover many imperfections which at firſt eſcaped our notice.

In the third place, an acquaintance with the ſtyle of the beſt authors is peculiarly requiſite. Hence a juſt taſte will be formed; and a copious fund be ſupplied of words on every ſubject. No exerciſe, perhaps, will be found more uſeful for acquiring a proper ſtyle, than to tranſlate ſome paſſage from an elegant author, into our own words. Thus, to take, for inſtance, a page of one of Mr. Addiſon's Spectators; and read it attentively two or three times,

till

till we are in full poſſeſſion of the thoughts it contains; then to lay aſide the book; to endeavour to write out the paſſage from memory, as well as we can; and then to compare what we have written with the ſtyle of the author. Such an exerciſe will, by compariſon, ſhew us our own defects; will teach us to correct them; and, from the variety of expreſſion which it will exhibit, will conduct us to that which is moſt beautiful and perfect.

In the fourth place, a caution muſt be given againſt a ſervile imitation of any one author whatever. A deſire of imitating hampers genius; and generally produces a ſtiffneſs of expreſſion. They who follow an author minutely, commonly copy his faults as well as his beauties. No one will ever become an accompliſhed writer or ſpeaker, who has not ſome confidence in his own genius. We ought carefully to avoid uſing any author's particular phraſes, or tranſcribing paſſages from him: Such an habit will be fatal to all genuine compoſition. It is much better to poſſeſs ſomething of our own, though of inferior beauty, than to endeavour to ſhine in borrowed ornaments, which will, at laſt, betray the utter barrenneſs of our genius.

In the fifth place, it is a plain but important rule, with regard to ſtyle, that we always endeavour to adapt it to the ſubject, and likewiſe to the capacity of our hearers, if we are to ſpeak in public. To attempt a poetical, florid ſtyle, when it ſhould be our buſineſs only to argue and reaſon, is in the higheſt degree awkward and abſurd. To ſpeak with elaborate pomp of words, before thoſe who cannot comprehend them, is equally ridiculous and uſeleſs. When we begin to write or ſpeak, we ſhould previouſly impreſs on our minds a complete idea of the end to be aimed at; keep this ſteadily in view, and adapt our ſtyle to it.

We muſt, in the laſt place, recommend, that an attentive regard to ſtyle do not occupy us ſo much, as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts. This rule is the more neceſſary, ſince the preſent taſte of the age ſeems to be directed more to ſtyle than to thought. It is much more eaſy to dreſs up trifling and common thoughts with ſome ornament of expreſſion, than to afford a fund of vigorous, ingenious, and uſeful ſentiments. The latter requires genius; the former may be attained by induſtry,

with

with the aid of very ſuperficial parts. Hence the crowd of writers who are rich in words, but poor in ſentiments. Cuſtom obliges us not to be inattentive to the ornaments of ſtyle, if we wiſh that our labours ſhould be read and admired. But he is a contemptible writer, who looks not beyond the dreſs of language; who lays not the chief ſtreſs upon his matter; and who does not regard ornament as a ſecondary and inferior recommendation.

CRITI-

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF MR. ADDISON'S STYLE, IN No. 411 OF THE SPECTATOR.

HAVING inſiſted rather copiouſly on the ſubject of language in general, we will now enter on a critical analyſis of the ſtyle of ſome good author. This will ſuggeſt obſervations which we have not hitherto had an opportunity of making, and will ſhew in a proper light, ſome of thoſe which have been made.

Mr. Addiſon, though one of the moſt beautiful writers in our language, is not the moſt correct; a circumſtance which makes his compoſition the more proper ſubject of our preſent criticiſm. We proceed, therefore, to examine No. 411, the firſt of his admired eſſays on the pleaſures of the imagination, in the ſixth volume of the Spectator. It begins thus:

Our ſight is the moſt perfect, and moſt delightful of all our ſenſes.

This ſentence is clear, preciſe, and ſimple. The author, in a few plain words, expreſſes the

pro-

propoſition which he is going to illuſtrate. A firſt ſentence ſhould ſeldom be long, and ſhould never be difficult to be underſtood.

He might have ſaid, *our ſight is the moſt perfect, and the moſt delightful.* But in omitting to repeat the particle *the*, he has been more judicious; ſince between *perfect* and *delightful*, in the preſent caſe, there being no contraſt, ſuch a repetition was unneceſſary. He proceeds:

It fills the mind with the largeſt variety of ideas, converſes with its objects at the greateſt diſtance, and continues the longeſt in action, without being tired or ſatiated with its proper enjoyments.

This ſentence is remarkably harmonious, and well conſtructed. It is completely conſpicuous. It is not loaded with unneceſſary words. That quality of a good ſentence which we termed its unity, is here entirely preſerved. The members of it grow, and riſe above each other in ſound, till it is conducted to one of the moſt harmonious cloſes which our language admits. It is figurative, without being too much ſo for the ſubject. There is no fault whatever, except that a ſevere critic might perhaps object, that the epithet *large*, which he applies to *variety*, is more

more commonly applied to extent than to number. It is evident, that he employed it to avoid the repetition of the word *great*, which occurs immediately afterwards.

The ſenſe of feeling can, indeed, give us a notion of extenſion, ſhape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours; but, at the ſame time, it is very much ſtraitened and confined in its operations, to the number, bulk, and diſtance of its particular objects. But is not every ſenſe confined, as much as the ſenſe of feeling, to the number, bulk, and diſtance of its own objects? The turn of expreſſion is alſo here very inaccurate; and it requires the two words, *with regard*, to be inſerted after the word *operations*, in order that the ſenſe ſhould be rendered, at all, clear and intelligible. The epithet *particular* ſeems to be uſed inſtead of *peculiar*; but theſe words, though often confounded, are of very different import. *Particular* is oppoſed to *general*; *peculiar* ſtands oppoſed to what is poſſeſſed in *common with others.*

Our ſight ſeems deſigned to ſupply all theſe defects, and may be conſidered as a more delicate and diffuſive kind of touch, that ſpreads itſelf over an in-

infinite multitude of bodies, comprehends the largeſt figures, and brings into our reach ſome of the moſt remote parts of the univerſe.

This ſentence is perſpicuous, graceful, well arranged, and highly harmonious. Its conſtruction is ſo ſimilar to that of the ſecond ſentence, that, had it immediately ſucceeded it, the ear would have been ſenſible of a faulty monotony. Another ſentence being interpoſed, however, prevents this unpleaſing effect.

It is this ſenſe which furniſhes the imagination with its ideas; ſo that by the pleaſures of the imagination or fancy, (which I ſhall uſe promiſcuouſly) I here mean ſuch as ariſe from viſible objects, either when we have them actually in view, or when we call up their ideas into our minds by paintings, ſtatues, deſcriptions, or any the like occaſion.

The parentheſis in the middle of this ſentence, is not ſufficiently clear: It ſhould have been, *terms which I ſhall uſe promiſcuouſly*; ſince the verb *uſe* does not relate to the pleaſures of the imagination, but to the terms of fancy and imagination, which were meant to be ſynonymous. To call a painting or a ſtatue *an occaſion*, is not an accurate expreſſion; nor is it very juſt

to

to ſpeak of *calling up ideas by occaſions.* The common phraſe, *any ſuch means*, would have been more natural and proper.

We cannot indeed have a ſingle image in the fancy, that did not make its firſt entrance through the ſight; but we have the power of retaining, altering and compounding thoſe images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and viſion that are moſt agreeable to the imagination; for, by this faculty, a man in a dungeon is capable of entertaining himſelf with ſcenes and landſcapes more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole compaſs of nature.

In one member of this ſentence there is an inaccuracy in ſyntax. It is proper to ſay, *altering and compounding thoſe images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and viſion:* But we cannot with propriety ſay, *retaining them into all the varieties*; and yet the arrangement requires this conſtruction. This error would have been avoided by arranging the paſſage in the following manner: "We have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding thoſe images which we have once received; and of forming them into all the varieties of

picture

picture and viſion."---The latter part of the ſentence is perſpicuous and elegant.

There are few words in the Engliſh language, which are employed in a more looſe and uncircumſcribed ſenſe, than thoſe of the fancy and the imagination.

Except when ſome aſſertion of conſequence is advanced, theſe little words, *it is*, and *there are*, ought to be avoided as redundant and enfeebling. The two firſt words of this ſentence, therefore, would have been much better omitted. The article prefixed to *fancy and imagination*, ſhould alſo have been left out, ſince he does not mean the power of *the fancy and the imagination*, but the words only. It had better been thus expreſſed: "Few words in the Engliſh language "are employed in a more looſe and uncircum- "ſcribed ſenſe, than fancy and imagination."

I therefore thought it neceſſary to fix and determine the notion of theſe two words, as I intend to make uſe of them in the thread of my following ſpeculations, that the reader may conceive rightly what is the ſubject which I proceed upon.

The words *fix* and *determine*, though they may appear ſo at firſt ſight, are not ſynonymous.

We

We *fix* what is looſe; we *determine* what is *uncircumſcribed.* They may be viewed, therefore, as applied here, with peculiar delicacy.

The *notion of theſe words*, is rather harſh, and is not ſo commonly uſed as the *meaning of theſe words---as I intend to make uſe of them in the thread of my ſpeculations*----this is evidently faulty. A metaphor is improperly mixed with the words in the literal ſenſe. *The ſubject which I proceed upon*, is an ungraceful cloſe of a ſentence; it ſhould have been, *the ſubject upon which I proceed.*

I muſt therefore deſire him to remember, that by the pleaſures of the imagination, I mean only ſuch pleaſures as ariſe originally from ſight, and that I divide theſe pleaſures into two kinds.

This ſentence begins in a manner too ſimilar to the preceding---*I mean only ſuch pleaſures*---the adverb only is not here in its proper place: It is not deſigned to qualify the verb *mean*, but *ſuch pleaſures*, and ought conſequently to have been placed immediately after the latter.

My deſign being, firſt of all, to diſcourſe of thoſe primary pleaſures of the imagination, which entirely proceed from ſuch objects as are before our eyes,

eyes; and, in the next place, to ſpeak of thoſe ſecondary pleaſures of the imagination, which flow from the ideas of viſible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable viſions of things, that are either abſent or fictitious.

This ſentence is ſomewhat clogged by a tedious phraſeology---*My deſign being firſt of all to diſcourſe---in the next place to ſpeak of---ſuch objects as are before our eyes---things that are either abſent or fictitious.* Several words might have been here omitted, and the ſtyle rendered more neat and compact.

The pleaſures of the imagination, taken in their full extent, are not ſo groſs as thoſe of ſenſe, nor ſo refined as thoſe of the underſtanding.

This ſentence is clear and elegant.

The laſt are indeed more preferable, becauſe they are founded on ſome new knowledge or improvement in the mind of man: Yet it muſt be confeſſed, that thoſe of the imagination are as great and as tranſporting as the other.

The phraſe, *more preferable*, is ſo palpable an inaccuracy, that one is ſurprized how it could have eſcaped the obſervation of Mr. Addiſon.

The

The propoſition contained in the laſt member of this ſentence, is neither clearly nor elegantly expreſſed-- *It muſt be confeſſed, that thoſe of the imagination are as great, and as tranſporting as the other.* In the beginning of this ſentence, he had called the pleaſures of the underſtanding *the laſt*; and he concludes with obſerving, that thoſe of the imagination are as great and tranſporting as *the other.* Beſides that *the other* makes not a proper contraſt with *the laſt*, it is leſs doubtful; whether by *the other*, are meant the pleaſures of the underſtanding or the pleaſures of ſenſe; though no doubt it was intended to refer to the pleaſures of the underſtanding only.

A beautiful proſpect delights the ſoul as much as a demonſtration; and a deſcription in Homer has charmed more readers than a chapter in Ariſtotle.

This is a good illuſtration of what had been aſſerted, and is expreſſed with that elegance for which Mr. Addiſon is diſtinguiſhed.

Beſides, the pleaſures of the imagination have this advantage above thoſe of the underſtanding, that they are more obvious, and more eaſy to be acquired.

This ſentence is unexceptionable.

It is but opening the eye, and the ſcene enters.

Though this is lively and pictureſque, yet we muſt remark a ſmall inaccuracy---A *ſcene* cannot be ſaid to *enter*; an *actor* enters; but a ſcene *appears*, or *preſents himſelf.*

The colours paint themſelves on the fancy, with very little attention of thought or application of mind in the beholder.

This is beautiful and elegant, and well ſuited to thoſe pleaſures of the imagination, of which the author is treating.

We are ſtruck, we know not how, with the ſymmetry of any thing we ſee; and immediately aſſent to the beauty of an object, without enquiring into the particular cauſes and occaſions of it.

We *aſſent* to the truth of a propoſition; but cannot, without impropriety, be ſaid *to aſſent to the beauty of an object.* In the concluſion, both *particular* and *occaſions* are ſuperfluous words; and the pronoun *it*, is in ſome meaſure doubtful, whether as referring to beauty or to object.

A man of polite imagination is let into a great many pleaſures, that the vulgar are not capable of receiving.

It

It may here, perhaps, be objected, that the word *polite*, is oftener applied to manners than to the imagination.---The uſe of *that* inſtead of *which* is too common with Mr. Addiſon. Except in caſes where it is neceſſary to avoid an ungraceful repetition, *which* is eſteemed preferable to *that*, and was undoubtedly ſo in the preſent inſtance.

He can converſe with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a ſtatue. He meets with a ſecret refreſhment in a deſcription; and often feels a greater ſatisfaction in the proſpect of fields and meadows, than another does in the poſſeſſion. It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in every thing he ſees; and makes the moſt rude uncultivated parts of nature adminiſter to his pleaſures: So that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light, and diſcovers in it a multitude of charms that conceal themſelves from the generality of mankind.

This ſentence is eaſy, flowing, and harmonious. We muſt, however, obſerve a ſlight inaccuracy----*It gives him a kind of property*--to this *it* there is no antecedent in the whole paragraph. To diſcover its connection, we muſt

look back to the third ſentence preceding, which begins with, *a man of a polite imagination.* This phraſe, *polite imagination*, is the only antecedent to which *it* can refer; and even that is not a proper antecedent, ſince it ſtands in the genitive caſe, as the qualification only of *a man.*

There are, indeed, but very few, who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a reliſh of any pleaſures that are not criminal; every diverſion they take is at the expence of ſome one virtue or another; and their very firſt ſtep out of buſineſs is into vice and folly.

This ſentence is truly elegant, muſical, and correct.

A man ſhould endeavour, therefore, to make the ſphere of his innocent pleaſures as wide as poſſible, that he may retire into them with ſafety, and find in them, ſuch a ſatisfaction as a wiſe man would not bluſh to take.

This is a proper ſentence, and expoſed to no objection.

Of this nature are thoſe of the imagination, which do not require ſuch a bent of thought as is neceſſary to our more ſerious employments; nor, at the ſame time, ſuffer the mind to ſink into that indo-

indolence and remiſſneſs, which are apt to accompany our more ſenſual delights; but like a gentle exerciſe to the faculties, awaken them from ſloth and idleneſs, without putting them upon any labour or difficulty.

The beginning of this ſentence is incorrect ---*Of this nature*, ſays he, *are thoſe of the imagination.* It might be aſked, of what nature? For the preceding ſentence had not deſcribed the nature of any claſs of pleaſures. He had ſaid, that it was every man's duty to make the ſphere of his innocent pleaſures as extenſive as poſſible, in order that, within that ſphere, he might find a ſafe retreat and a laudable ſatisfaction. The tranſition therefore, is made looſely. It would have been better if he had ſaid, "This advan-" tage we gain," or "This ſatisfaction we " enjoy." by means of the pleaſures of the imagination. The reſt of the ſentence is beautiful and unexceptionable.

We might here add, that the pleaſures of the fancy are more conducive to health than thoſe of the underſtanding, which are worked out by dint of thinking, and attended with too violent a labour of the brain.

A minute critic might here obſerve, that *worked out by dint of thinking*, is a phraſe which borders too much on the ſtyle of common converſation, to be admitted, with propriety, into a poliſhed compoſition.

Delightful ſcenes, whether in nature, painting, or poetry, have a kindly influence on the body, as well as the mind, and not only ſerve to clear and brighten the imagination, but are able to diſperſe grief and melancholy, and to ſet the animal ſpirits in pleaſing and agreeable motions. For this reaſon, Sir Francis Bacon, in his Eſſay upon Health, has not thought it improper to preſcribe to his reader a poem, or a proſpect, where he particularly diſſuades him from knotty and ſubtile diſquiſitions, and adviſes him to purſue ſtudies that fill the mind with ſplendid and illuſtrious objects, as hiſtories, fables, and contemplations of nature.

In the latter of theſe two ſentences, a member of the period is improperly placed---*Where he particularly diſſuades him from knotty and ſubtile diſquiſitions, has not thought it improper, &c.*

I have, in this paper, by way of introduction, ſettled the notion of thoſe pleaſures of the imagination, which are the ſubject of my preſent undertaking;

taking; and endeavoured, by ſeveral conſiderations, to recommend to my readers the purſuit of thoſe pleaſures; I ſhall, in my next paper, examine the ſeveral ſources from whence theſe pleaſures are derived.

Theſe two concluding ſentences furniſh examples of the proper collocation of circumſtances in a period. We have formerly ſhewed, that a judicious collocation of them is a matter of difficulty. Had the following incidental circumſtances---*by way of introduction*---*by ſeveral conſiderations*---*in this paper*---*in the next paper* been placed in any other ſituation, the ſentence would neither have been ſo neat nor ſo clear as it is by the preſent conſtruction.

ELOQUENCE.

ORIGIN OF ELOQUENCE.

GRECIAN ELOQUENCE.

DEMOSTHENES.

ELOQUENCE is the art of perſuaſion. Its moſt eſſential requiſites are, ſolid argument, clear method, and an appearance of ſincerity in the ſpeaker, with ſuch graces of ſtyle and utterance, as ſhall invite and command attention. Good ſenſe muſt be its foundation. Without this, no man can be truly eloquent; ſince fools can perſuade none but fools. Before we can perſuade a man of ſenſe, we muſt convince him. Convincing and perſuading, though ſometimes confounded, are of very different import. Conviction affects the underſtanding only; perſuaſion, the will and the practice. It is the buſineſs of the philoſopher to convince us of truth; it is that of the orator to perſuade us to act conformably to it, by engaging our affec-

tions

tions in its favour. Conviction is, however, one avenue to the heart; and it is that which an orator muſt firſt attempt to gain; for no perſuaſion can be ſtable, which is not founded on conviction. But the orator muſt not be ſatisfied with convincing; he muſt addreſs himſelf to the paſſions; he muſt paint to the fancy, and touch the heart; and hence, beſide ſolid argument and clear method, all the captivating and intereſting arts, both of compoſition and pronunciation, enter into the idea of eloquence.

Eloquence may be conſidered as conſiſting of three kinds, or degrees. The firſt, and moſt inferior, is that which endeavours only to pleaſe the hearers. Such, in general, is the eloquence of panegyricks, inaugural orations, addreſſes to great men, and other harangues of this kind. This ornamental ſort of compoſition may innocently amuſe and entertain the mind; and may be connected, at the ſame time, with very uſeful ſentiments. But it muſt be acknowledged, that where the ſpeaker intends only to ſhine and to pleaſe, there is no ſmall danger of art being ſtrained into oſtentation, and of the compoſition becoming tireſome and inſipid.

A ſecond, and a ſuperior degree of eloquence is, when the ſpeaker propoſes, not merely to pleaſe, but likewiſe to inform, to inſtruct, to convince; when his art is employed in removing prejudices againſt himſelf and his cauſe; in ſelecting the moſt proper arguments, ſtating them with the greateſt force, diſpoſing of them in the beſt order, expreſſing and delivering them with propriety and beauty; and thereby preparing us to paſs that judgment, or favour that ſide of the cauſe, to which he deſires to bring us. Within this degree, chiefly, is employed the eloquence of the bar.

Yet there remains a third, and ſtill higher degree of eloquence, by which we are not only convinced, but are intereſted, agitated, and carried along with the ſpeaker; our paſſions riſe with his; we ſhare all his emotions; we love, we hate, we reſent, as he inſpires us; and are prepared to reſolve, or to act, with vigour and warmth. Debate, in popular aſſemblies, opens the moſt extenſive field for the exerciſe of this ſpecies of eloquence; and the pulpit likewiſe admits it.

It is neceſſary to remark, that this high ſpecies of eloquence is always the offspring of paſſion. By paſſion, we mean that ſtate of the mind in which it is agitated and fired by ſome object it has in view. Hence the univerſally acknowledged power of enthuſiaſm in public ſpeakers, affecting their audience. Hence all ſtudied declamation, and laboured ornaments of ſtyle, which ſhew the mind to be cool and unmoved, are ſo incompatible with perſuaſive eloquence. Hence every kind of affectation in geſture and pronunciation, diminiſh ſo much the merits of a ſpeaker. Hence, in fine, the neceſſity of being, and of being believed to be, diſintereſted and in earneſt, in order to perſuade.

In tracing the origin of eloquence, it is not neceſſary to go far back into the early ages of the world, or to ſearch for it among the monuments of Eaſtern or Egyptian antiquity. In thoſe ages, it is true, there was a certain kind of eloquence; but it was more nearly allied to poetry than to what we properly call oratory. Whilſt the intercourſe among men was unfrequent, and force and ſtrength were the principal means employed in deciding controverſies, the arts of ora-

tory and perſuaſion, of reaſoning and debate, could be little known. The firſt empires that aroſe, the Aſſyrian and Egyptian, were of the deſpotic kind. A ſingle perſon, or at moſt a few, held the reins of government. The multitude were accuſtomed to a blind obedience; they were driven, not perſuaded; and, conſequently, none of thoſe refinements of ſociety, which make public ſpeaking an object of importance, were as yet introduced.

It is not till the origin of the Grecian Republics, that we perceive any remarkable appearances of eloquence as the art of perſuaſion; and theſe opened to it ſuch a field as it never had before, and, perhaps, has never again, ſince that time, experienced. Greece was divided into a number of little ſtates. Theſe were governed, at firſt, by kings, who were not unmeaningly termed tyrants, and who being ſucceſſively, by the wiſdom of the people, expelled from their dominions, there ſprung up a multitude of democratical governments, founded nearly upon the ſame plan, animated by the ſame glorious ſpirit of freedom, mutually jealous, and rivals of each other. Among theſe, Athens ſhone forth

with

with a ſuperior luſtre. In this ſtate, arts of every kind, but eſpecially eloquence was brought to the higheſt perfection. We ſhall paſs over the orators who flouriſhed in the early period of this Republic, and take a view of the great Demoſthenes, in whom eloquence ſhone forth with the higheſt and moſt unrivalled ſplendour. Not formed by nature either to pleaſe or to perſuade, he ſtruggled with, and ſurmounted, the moſt formidable impediments. He ſhut himſelf up in a cave, that he might ſtudy with leſs diſtraction. He declaimed by the ſea ſhore, that he might be uſed to the noiſe of a tumultuous aſſembly; and with pebbles in his mouth, that he might correct a defect in his ſpeech. He practiſed at home with a naked ſword hanging over his ſhoulder, that he might check an ungraceful motion to which he was ſubject. Hence, the example of this great man affords the higheſt encouragement to every ſtudent of eloquence, ſince it ſhews how far art and application could avail, for acquiring an excellence which nature appeared willing to have denied.

No orator had ever a finer field than Demoſthenes, in his Olynthiacs and Philippics, which

are

are his capital orations; and undoubtedly, to the greatneſs of the ſubject, and to that integrity and public ſpirit which breathe in them, they owe a large portion of their merit. The ſubject is, to excite the indignation of his countrymen againſt Philip of Macedon, the public enemy of the liberties of Greece; and to guard them againſt the treacherous meaſures, by which that crafty tyrant endeavoured to lull them into a neglect of their danger. To attain this end, we ſee him uſe every proper means to animate a people, diſtinguiſhed by juſtice, humanity, and valour; but in many inſtances become corrupt and degenerate. He boldly accuſes them of venality, indolence, and indifference to the public good, while, at the ſame time, he reminds them of their former glory, and of their preſent reſources. His contemporary orators, who were bribed by Philip, and who perſuaded the people to peace, he openly reproaches as traitors to their country. He not only prompts to vigorous meaſures, but teaches how they are to be carried into execution. His orations are ſtrongly animated, and full of the impetuoſity and ardour of public ſpirit. His compoſition is not diſtinguiſhed

guiſhed by ornament and ſplendour. It is an energy of thought, peculiarly his own, which forms his character, and raiſes him above his ſpecies. He ſeems not to attend to words, but to things. We forget the orator, and think of the ſubject. He has no parade and oſtentation; no ſtudied introductions; but is like a man full of his ſubject, who, after preparing his audience by a ſentence or two, for the reception of plain truths, enters directly on buſineſs.

The ſtyle of Demoſthenes is ſtrong and conciſe; though ſometimes, it muſt be confeſſed, harſh and abrupt. His words are highly expreſſive, and his arrangement firm and manly. Negligent of leſſer graces, he ſeems to have aimed at that ſublime which lies in ſentiment. His action and pronunciation are ſaid to have been uncommonly vehement and ardent; which, from the manner of his writings, we ſhould readily believe. His character appears to have been of the auſtere, rather than of the gentle kind. He is always grave, ſerious, paſſionate; never degrading himſelf, nor attempting any thing like pleaſantry. If his admirable eloquence be in any reſpect faulty, it is that he ſometimes

bor-

borders on the hard and dry. He may be thought to want ſmoothneſs and grace; which is attributed to his imitating too cloſely the manner of Thucydides, who was his great model for ſtyle, and whoſe hiſtory he is ſaid to have tranſcribed eight times with his own hand. But theſe defects are more than atoned for, by the maſterly force of maſculine eloquence, which, as it overpowered all who heard it, cannot, in the preſent day, be read without emotion.

ROMAN

ROMAN ELOQUENCE—CICERO.
MODERN ELOQUENCE.

HAVING treated of the ſtate of eloquence among the Greeks, we now proceed to conſider its progreſs among the Romans; where we ſhall find one model, at leaſt, of eloquence, in its moſt ſplendid and cultivated form. The Romans derived their eloquence, poetry, and learning from the Greeks, and were, conſequently, far inferior to them in genius for all theſe accompliſhments. They had neither their vivacity nor ſenſibility; their paſſions were not ſo eaſily moved, nor their conceptions ſo vigorous; in compariſon of them they were a phlegmatic people. Their language bore a reſemblance to their character; it was regular, firm, and ſtately; but wanted that expreſſive ſimplicity, that flexibility to ſuit every different ſpecies of compoſition, for which the Greek tongue is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed. And hence, by compariſon, we ſhall always find, that in the

Greek

Greek productions there is more native genius; in the Roman, more regularity and art.

Since the Roman government, during the Republic, was of the popular kind, public ſpeaking, no doubt, became early the means of acquiring power, honour and diſtinction. But in the rude, unpoliſhed times of the ſtate, their ſpeaking could hardly deſerve the name of eloquence. It was not till a ſhort time preceding the age of Cicero, that the Roman orators roſe into any reputation. Craſſus and Antonius ſeem to have been the moſt eminent; but as none of their productions are extant, nor any of Hortenſius's, who was Cicero's rival at the bar, it is not neceſſary to tranſcribe what Cicero has ſaid of them, and of the character of their eloquence.

The object moſt worthy of our attention is Cicero himſelf, whoſe name alone ſuggeſts to us whatever is ſplendid in oratory. With his life and character, in other reſpects, we are not at preſent concerned. We ſhall view him only as an eloquent ſpeaker, and endeavour to remark both his virtues and his defects. His virtues are, beyond doubt, ſuperlatively great. In all his orations his art is conſpicuous. He begins, com-

mon-

monly, with a regular exordium, and with much addreſs prepoſſeſſes the hearers, and ſtudies to gain their affections. His method is clear, and his arguments are arranged with exact propriety. In a ſuperior clearneſs of method, he has an advantages over Demoſthenes. Every thing appears in its proper place; he never tries to move till he has attempted to convince; and in moving, particularly the ſofter paſſions, he is highly ſucceſsful. No one ever knew the force of words better than Cicero. He rolls them along with the greateſt beauty and magnificence; and in the ſtructure of his ſentences, is eminently curious and exact. He is always full and flowing; never abrupt. He amplifies every thing; yet though his manner is generally diffuſe, it is often happily varied, and accommodated to the ſubject. When an important public object rouſed his mind, and demanded indignation and force, he departs conſiderably from that looſe and declamatory manner to which he at other times is addicted, and becomes very forcible and vehement.

This great orator, however, is not without his defects. In moſt of his orations there is too much

much art, even carried to a degree of oſtentation. He ſeems often deſirous of obtaining admiration, rather than of operating conviction. He is ſometimes, therefore, ſhowy rather than ſolid; and diffuſe where he ought to have been urgent. His ſentences are always round and ſonorous; they cannot be accuſed of monotony, ſince they poſſeſs variety of cadence; but from too great a fondneſs for magnificence, he is on ſome occaſions deficient in ſtrength. Though the ſervices which he had performed to his country were very conſiderable, yet he is too much his own panegyriſt. Ancient manners, which impoſed fewer reſtraints on the ſide of decorum, may in ſome degree excuſe, but cannot entirely juſtify, his vanity.

Whether Demoſthenes or Cicero be the moſt perfect orator, is a queſtion on which critics are by no means agreed. Fenelon, the celebrated Archbiſhop of Cambray, and author of Telemachus, ſeems, in our opinion, to have ſtated their merits with great juſtice and perſpicuity. His judgment is given in his Reflections on Rhetoric and Poetry. We ſhall tranſlate the paſſage, though not, it is to be feared, without

loſing

loſing much of the ſpirit of the original. "I do
"not heſitate to declare" ſays he, "that I
"think Demoſthenes ſuperior to Cicero. I am
"perſuaded no one can admire Cicero more
"than I do. He adorns whatever he attempts.
"He does honour to language. He diſpoſes of
"words in a manner peculiar to himſelf. His
"ſtyle has great variety of character. When-
"ever he pleaſes, he is even conciſe and vehe-
"ment; for inſtance, againſt Catiline, againſt
"Verres, againſt Anthony. But ornament is
"too viſible in his writings. His art is wonder-
"ful, but it is perceived. When the orator is
"providing for the ſafety of the Republic, he
"forgets not himſelf, nor permits others to
"forget him. Demoſthenes ſeems to eſcape
"from himſelf, and to ſee nothing but his
"country. He ſeeks not elegance of expreſſion;
"unſought for he poſſeſſes it. He is ſuperior to
"admiration. He makes uſe of language, as a
"modeſt man does of dreſs, only to cover him.
"He thunders, he lightens. He is a torrent
"which carries every thing before it. We
"cannot criticiſe, becauſe we are not ourſelves.
"His ſubject enchains our attention, and makes

"us

" us forget his language. We loſe him from
" our ſight : Philip alone occupies our minds.
" I am delighted with both theſe orators ; but
" I confeſs that I am leſs affected by the infi-
" nite art and magnificent eloquence of Cicero,
" than by the rapid ſimplicity of Demoſthenes."

The empire of eloquence, among the Romans, was exceedingly ſhort. It expired with Cicero. Nor can we wonder at this being the caſe, ſince liberty was no more ; and ſince the government of Rome was delivered over to a ſucceſſion of the moſt execrable tyrants that ever diſgraced and ſcourged the human race.

In the decline of the Roman Empire, the introduction of Chriſtianity gave riſe to a new kind of eloquence, in the apologies, ſermons, and paſtoral writings of the fathers. But none of them afford very juſt models of eloquence. Their language, as ſoon as we deſcend to the third or fourth century, becomes harſh ; and they are, generally, infected with the taſte of that age, a love of ſwoln and ſtrained thoughts, and of the play of words.

As nothing occurs that deſerves attention in the middle ages, we paſs now to the ſtate of elo-

eloquence in modern times. Here it muſt be acknowledged, that in no European nation, public ſpeaking has been valued ſo highly, or cultivated with ſo much care, as in Greece and Rome. The genius of the world appears, in this reſpect, to have undergone ſome alteration. The two nations where we might expect to find moſt of the ſpirit of eloquence, are France and Great Britain: France, on account of the diſtinguiſhed turn of its inhabitants towards all the liberal arts, and of the encouragement which, for more than a century paſt, thoſe arts have received from the public: Great-Britain, on account of its free government, and the liberal ſpirit and genius of its people. Yet in neither of theſe countries has the talent of oratory riſen near to the degree of its ancient ſplendour.

Several reaſons may be given, why modern eloquence has been ſo confined, and humble in its efforts. In the firſt place, it ſeems, that this change muſt, in part, be aſcribed to that accurate turn of thinking, which has been ſo much cultivated in modern times. Our public ſpeakers are obliged to be more reſerved than the ancients, in their endeavours to elevate the imagination

and

and warm the paſſions; and, by the influence of prevailing taſte, their own genius is, perhaps, in too great a degree, rendered chaſte and delicate. It is probable alſo, that we aſcribe to our correctneſs and good ſenſe, what is chiefly owing to the phlegm and natural coldneſs of our diſpoſition. For the vivacity and ſenſibility of the Greeks and Romans, more particularly of the former, ſeem to have been much ſuperior to ours, and to have communicated to them a higher reliſh for all the beauties of oratory.

Though the Parliament of our own nation be the nobleſt field which Europe at preſent affords to a public ſpeaker, yet eloquence has ever been there a more feeble inſtrument than in the popular aſſemblies of Greece and Rome. Under ſome foreign reigns, the iron hand of arbitrary power checked its efforts; and, in later times, miniſterial influence has generally rendered it of ſmall importance. At the bar, our diſadvantage, in compariſon of the ancients, is conſiderable. Among them, the judges were commonly numerous; the laws were few and ſimple; the deciſion of cauſes was left, in a great meaſure, to equity, and the ſenſe of mankind. Hence the

field

field for judicial eloquence was large and ample. But at preſent, the ſyſtem of law is become much more complicated. The knowledge of it is rendered ſo laborious an attainment, as to conſtitute the buſineſs of a man's life. Speaking is, therefore, only a ſecondary accompliſhment, for which he has little leiſure.

With reſpect to the pulpit, it has been highly diſadvantageous, that the habit of reading ſermons, inſtead of repeating them, has prevailed ſo univerſally in England. By this habit, indeed, accuracy may have been introduced, but eloquence has been much enfeebled. Another circumſtance too, has been prejudicial. The ſectaries and fanatics, before the Reſtoration, uſed a warm, zealous, and popular manner of preaching; and their adherents afterwards continued to diſtinguiſh themſelves by a ſimilar ardour. A hatred of theſe ſects drove the eſtabliſhed church into the oppoſite extreme, of a ſtudied coolneſs of expreſſion. Hence, from the art of perſuaſion, which preaching ought ever to be, it has paſſed, with us, into mere reaſoning and inſtruction.

ELOQUENCE OF POPULAR ASSEMBLIES.

THE foundation of every ſpecies of eloquence, is good ſenſe, and ſolid thought. It ſhould be the firſt ſtudy of him who means to addreſs any popular aſſembly, to be previouſly maſter of the buſineſs on which he is to ſpeak; to be well provided with matter and argument; and to reſt upon theſe the chief ſtreſs. This will give to language an air of manlineſs and ſtrength, which is a principal inſtrument of perſuaſion. Ornament, if there be a genius for it, will ſucceed of courſe; and at any rate, it deſerves only a ſecondary regard.

To become a perſuaſive ſpeaker in a popular aſſembly, it ſeems to be a capital rule, that a man ſhould always be perſuaded of whatever he recommends to others. Never, if it can be avoided, ſhould he eſpouſe any ſide of the argument, but what he believes to be the juſt one. All high eloquence muſt be the offspring of real, unaffected paſſion. This makes every man perſua-

ſuaſive, and gives a force to his genius, which it cannot otherwiſe poſſeſs.

Debate, in popular aſſemblies, ſeldom allows the ſpeaker that previous preparation, which the pulpit always, and the bar ſometimes, admits. A general prejudice prevails, and not an unjuſt one, againſt ſet ſpeeches in public meetings. At the opening of a debate, they may, indeed, ſometimes be introduced with propriety; but as the debate advances, they become improper; they commonly loſe the appearance of being ſuggeſted by the buſineſs that is going on. Study and oſtentation are apt to be too conſpicuous; and, conſequently, though admired as elegant, they are ſeldom ſo perſuaſive as more free and unconſtrained diſcourſes.

This, however, does not by any means prohibit a premeditation of the ſubject on which we intend to ſpeak. With reſpect to the matter, we cannot be too accurate in our preparation; but with regard to words and expreſſion, it is very poſſible to be ſo aſſiduous, as to render our ſpeech ſtiff and preciſe. A few ſhort notes of the ſubſtance of the diſcourſe, are, however, not only allowable, but of conſiderable ſervice, to

thoſe, eſpecially, who are beginning to ſpeak in public. They will teach them a degree of accuracy, which, if they ſpeak frequently, they are in danger too ſoon of loſing. They will accuſtom them to a diſtinct arrangement, without which, eloquence, however great, cannot produce entire conviction.

Popular aſſemblies afford ſcope for the moſt animated manner of public ſpeaking. Paſſion is eaſily excited in a great aſſembly, where the movements are communicated by mutual ſympathy between the orator and the audience. That ardour of ſpeech, that vehemence and warmth of ſentiment, which proceed from a mind animated and inſpired by ſome great and public object, conſtitute the peculiar character of popular eloquence, in its higheſt degree of perfection.

The warmth, however, which we expreſs, muſt be always ſuited to the ſubject; ſince it would be ridiculous to introduce great vehemence concerning a matter, which is either of ſmall importance, or which, by its nature, requires to be treated of with calmneſs. We muſt alſo be careful not to counterfeit warmth without

out feeling it. The beſt rule is, to follow nature; and never to attempt a ſtrain of eloquence which is not prompted by our own genius. A ſpeaker may acquire both reputation and influence, by a calm argumentative manner. To reach the pathetic and the ſublime of oratory, requires thoſe ſtrong ſenſibilities of mind, and that high power of expreſſion, which are the lot of a very ſmall portion of mankind.

Even when vehemence is juſtified by the ſubject, and prompted by genius; when warmth is felt, not feigned; we muſt, however, be cautious, leſt impetuoſity carry us beyond the bounds of prudence and propriety. If the ſpeaker loſe the command of himſelf, he will ſoon ceaſe to influence his hearers. He ſhould begin with moderation; and endeavour to warm his audience gradually and equally with himſelf. For if their paſſions be not in uniſon with his, the diſcord will ſoon become diſagreeable and offenſive. Reſpect for his hearers ſhould always lay a decent reſtraint upon his warmth, and prevent it from carrying him beyond proper limits. When this is the caſe, when a ſpeaker is ſo far maſter of himſelf as to preſerve cloſe at-

tention to argument, and even to ſome degree of accurate expreſſion, this ſelf-command, this effort of reaſon, in the midſt of paſſion, contributes in the higheſt degree, both to pleaſe and to perſuade. The advantages of paſſion are afforded for the purpoſes of perſuaſion, without that confuſion and diſorder which are its uſual attendants.

In the moſt animated ſtrain of popular ſpeaking, we muſt always preſerve a due regard to what the public ear will receive without diſguſt. Without an attention to this, an injudicious imitation of ancient orators might betray a ſpeaker into a boldneſs of manner, with which the coolneſs of modern taſte would be diſſatisfied and diſpleaſed. It is alſo neceſſary, to attend with care to all the decorums of time, place, and character. No ardour of eloquence can atone for the neglect of theſe. No one ſhould attempt to ſpeak in public, without forming to himſelf a juſt and ſtrict idea of what is ſuitable to his own age and character; what is ſuitable to the ſubject, the hearers, the place, and the occaſion. On this idea he ſhould adjuſt the whole train and manner of his elocution.

What

What degree of conciſeneſs or diffuſeneſs is ſuited to popular eloquence, it is not eaſy to determine with preciſion. A diffuſe manner is generally conſidered as the moſt proper. It ſeems, however, that there is danger of erring in this reſpect; and that, by too diffuſe a ſtyle, public ſpeakers often loſe more in point of ſtrength, than they gain by the fulneſs of their illuſtration. Exceſſive conciſeneſs, indeed, muſt be cautiouſly avoided. We muſt explain and inculcate; but confine ourſelves within certain limits. We never forget, that however we may be delighted with hearing ourſelves ſpeak, every audience is apt to tire; and the moment they grow weary, our eloquence becomes uſeleſs. It is better, in general, to ſay too little than too much; to place our thought in one ſtrong point of view, and reſt it there, than by ſhewing it in every light, and pouring forth a profuſion of words upon it, exhauſt the attention of our hearers, and leave them languid and fatigued.

ELOQUENCE OF THE BAR.

THE objects of eloquence at the bar, and in popular aſſemblies, are commonly different. In the latter, the orator endeavours principally to perſuade; to determine his hearers to ſome choice, or conduct, as good, fit, or uſeful. He conſequently applies himſelf to every principle of action in our nature; to the paſſions and to the heart, as well as to the underſtanding. At the bar, however, conviction is the principal object. There, the ſpeaker's duty is not to perſuade the judges to what is good or uſeful, but to exhibit what is juſt and true; and conſequetly, it is to the underſtanding that his eloquence is chiefly to be addreſſed.

At the bar, ſpeakers addreſs themſelves to one, or to a few judges, who are, generally, perſons of age, gravity, and dignity of character. There, thoſe advantages which a mixed and numerous aſſembly affords for the exerciſe of all the arts of eloquence, are not admiſſible. Paſſion does

not

not riſe ſo eaſily; the ſpeaker is heard with great coolneſs; he is watched with more ſeverity; and would expoſe himſelf to ridicule, ſhould he adopt that high and animated tone which is ſuited only to a crowded and mixed aſſembly. Beſides, at the bar, the field of ſpeaking is very limited and confined. Law and ſtatute are the ramparts, beyond which it is not allowed to paſs. Imagination is fettered. The advocate ſees before him the line, the ſquare, and the compaſs. Theſe, it is his chief buſineſs to be conſtantly applying to the ſubjects under debate.

Hence the eloquence of the bar is of a much more limited, more ſober, and chaſtiſed kind, than that of popular aſſemblies; and conſequently the judicial orations of the antients, muſt not be conſidered as exact models of that kind of ſpeaking which is adapted to the preſent ſtate of the bar. With them, ſtrict law was much leſs an object of attention that it is at preſent. In the times of Demoſthenes and Cicero, the municipal ſtatutes were few, ſimple, and general; and the deciſion of cauſes was left, in a great meaſure, to the equity and com-

mon ſenſe of the judges. Eloquence, rather than juriſprudence, was the ſtudy of the pleaders. Cicero informs us, that three months ſtudy would make a complete civilian; nay, it was even thought, that a man might be a good pleader without any previous application. Among the Romans, there was a ſet of men called *Pragmatici*, whoſe office it was to ſupply the orator with all the law knowledge which his cauſe required, and which he diſpoſed of in that popular form, and ornamented with thoſe colours of eloquence, which were moſt fitted for influencing the judges.

It may alſo be obſerved, that the civil and criminal judges, both in Greece and Rome, were uſually much more numerous than with us, and formed a kind of popular aſſembly. The celebrated tribunal of the Areopagus at Athens, conſiſted of fifty judges at the leaſt. In Rome, the *Judices Selecti*, as they were called, were always numerous, and had the office and power of both judge and jury. In the noted cauſe of Milo, Cicero ſpoke to fifty-one *Judices Selecti*; and thus had the advantage of addreſſing his whole pleading, not to one, or to a few

learned

learned judges, of the point of law, as at preſent, but to an aſſembly of Roman citizens. Hence thoſe arts of popular eloquence which he employed with ſuch ſucceſs. Hence certain practices, which would be conſidered as theatrical by us, were common at the Roman bar; ſuch as introducing not only the accuſed perſon, dreſſed in deep mourning, but preſenting to the judges his family, and his young children, endeavouring to excite pity by their cries and tears.

The foundation of a lawyer's reputation and ſucceſs, muſt, in the preſent times, be always laid in a profound knowledge of his profeſſion. If his abilities as a ſpeaker be ever ſo eminent, yet if his knowledge of the law be reckoned ſuperficial, few will chooſe to engage him in their defence. Beſides previous ſtudy, and an ample ſtock of acquired knowledge, another thing inſeparable from the ſucceſs of every pleader is, a diligent and painful attention to every cauſe with which he is entruſted, ſo as to be completely maſter of all the facts and circumſtances with which it is connected. By this means, he

will, in a great meaſure, be prepared for the arguments of his opponents; and being previouſly acquainted with the weak parts of his own cauſe, he will be able to fortify them in the beſt manner, againſt the attacks of his adverſaries.

Though the antient popular and vehement manner of pleading be now in a great meaſure ſuperſeded, we muſt not conclude, that there is no room for eloquence at the bar, and that the ſtudy of it is become ſuperfluous. There is, perhaps, no ſcene of public ſpeaking where eloquence is more requiſite. The dryneſs and ſubtilty of the ſubjects uſually agitated at the bar, require, more than any other, a certain kind of expreſſion, in order to command attention; to give proper weight to the arguments that are employed; and to prevent whatever the pleader advances from paſſing unregarded. The effect of good ſpeaking is always highly conſpicuous. There is as much difference in the impreſſion we receive from a cold, dry, and confuſed ſpeaker, and that made upon us by one who pleads the ſame cauſe with elegance, order, and ſtrength, as there is between our conception of an object, when viewed by the glimmering of

twi-

twilight, and when beheld by the wide effulgence of a ſummer's noon.

Purity and neatneſs of expreſſion is, in this ſpecies of eloquence, chiefly to be ſtudied; a ſtyle perſpicuous and proper, not needleſsly overcharged with the pedantry of law terms, nor affectedly avoiding theſe, when they are ſuitable and requiſite. Verboſity is a fault of which men of this profeſſion are frequently accuſed; and into which the habit of ſpeaking and writing ſo haſtily, and with ſo little preparation as they are often obliged to do, almoſt unavoidably betrays them. It cannot, therefore, be too earneſtly recommended to thoſe who are beginning to practiſe at the bar, that they ſhould early endeavour to guard againſt this, whilſt they have full leiſure for preparation. Let them form themſelves to the habit of a ſtrong and correct ſtyle; which will become natural to them afterwards, when compelled by a multiplicity of buſineſs to compoſe with more precipitation. Whereas, if a looſe and negligent ſtyle has been ſuffered to become familiar, they will not be able, even upon occaſions when they wiſh to make an unuſual effort, to expreſs themſelves with force and elegance.

Diſ-

Diſtinctneſs, in ſpeaking at the bar, is peculiarly neceſſary. It ſhould be ſhewn, firſt, in ſtating the queſtion; in exhibiting clearly the point in debate; in ſhewing what we admit; what we deny; and where the line of diviſion begins between us and the adverſe party. Next, it ſhould appear in the order and arrangement of all the parts of the pleading. A clear method is of the higheſt conſequence in every ſpecies of oration; but in thoſe intricate caſes which belong to the bar, it becomes infinitely eſſential.

The narration of facts ſhould always be as conciſe as the nature of them will admit. They are always very neceſſary to be remembered, and, conſequently, tediouſneſs in relating them, and an unneceſſary minuteneſs, clogs and overloads the memory. Whereas, if a pleader omit all ſuperfluous circumſtances in his recital, he adds ſtrength to the material facts; he gives a clearer view of what he relates, and makes the impreſſion of it more laſting. In argumentation, however, a more diffuſe manner ſeems requiſite at the bar, than on ſome other occaſions. For, in popular aſſemblies, where the ſubject of debate is commonly plain and obvious, arguments

gain

gain ſtrength by their conciſeneſs. But the intricacy of law points frequently requires the arguments to be expanded, and expoſed in different lights, in order to be completely apprehended.

Candour in ſtating the arguments of his adverſary cannot be too much recommended to every pleader. Should he diſguiſe them, or place them in a falſe light, the artifice will be ſoon diſcovered; and the judge and the hearers will conclude, that he either wants diſcernment to perceive, or fairneſs to admit, the ſtrength of his opponent's reaſoning. But if he ſtate with accuracy and candour, the arguments uſed againſt him, before he endeavours to confute them, a ſtrong prejudice will prevail in his favour. He will appear to have an entire confidence in his own cauſe, ſince he does not attempt to ſupport it by artifice and concealment. The judge will conſequently be inclined to receive much more readily, the impreſſions made upon him by a ſpeaker who appears, at the ſame time, both candid and intelligent.

Wit may ſometimes be ſerviceable at the bar, particularly in a lively reply, by which ridicule

may

may be thrown on what an adverſary has advanced. But a young pleader ſhould be cautious how he admits too freely the indulgence of this dazzling talent. His office is not to excite laughter, but to produce conviction; nor, perhaps, ever did any one riſe to eminence in his profeſſion, by being a witty lawyer.

Since an advocate perſonates his client, he muſt plead his cauſe with a proper degree of warmth. He muſt be cautious, however, of proſtituting his earneſtneſs and ſenſibility, by an equal degree of ardour on every ſubject. There is a dignity of character which it is highly important for every one of this profeſſion to ſupport. An opinion of probity and honour in the pleader, is his moſt powerful inſtrument of perſuaſion. He ſhould always, therefore, decline embarking in cauſes which are odious and manifeſtly unjuſt; and, when he ſupports a doubtful cauſe, he ſhould lay the chief ſtreſs upon the arguments which appear to his judgment the moſt forcible; reſerving his zeal and indignation for caſes where injuſtice and iniquity are notorious.

ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

HAVING already treated of the eloquence of popular aſſemblies, and of that of the bar, we ſhall now conſider the ſtrain and ſpirit of that eloquence which is ſuited to the pulpit. This field of public ſpeaking has, evidently, ſeveral advantages peculiar to itſelf. The dignity and importance of its ſubjects muſt be allowed to be ſuperior to any other. They admit of the higheſt embelliſhments in deſcription, and the greateſt warmth and vehemence of expreſſion. In treating his ſubject, the preacher has alſo peculiar advantages. He ſpeaks not to one or a few judges, but to a numerous aſſembly. He is not afraid of interruption. He chuſes his ſubject at leiſure; and has all the aſſiſtance which the moſt accurate premeditation can afford him. The diſadvantages, however, which attend the eloquence of the pulpit, are by no means inconſiderable. The preacher, it is true, has no con-

tention

tention with an adverſary ; but debate awakens genius, and excites attention. His ſubjects, though noble, are trite and common. They are become ſo familiar to the public ear, that it requires no ordinary genius in the preacher, to fix the attention of his hearers. Nothing is more difficult, than to beſtow on what is common, the grace of novelty. Beſides, the ſubject of the preacher uſually confines him to abſtract qualities, to virtues and vices ; whereas, that of other popular ſpeakers leads them to treat of perſons ; which is a ſubject generally more intereſting to the hearers, and which occupies more powerfully the imagination. We are taught by the preacher to deteſt only the crime ; by the pleader to deteſt the criminal. Hence it happens, that though the number of moderately good preachers is great, there are ſo few who have arrived at eminence. Perfection is very diſtant, indeed, from modern preaching. The object, however, is truly noble and illuſtrious ; and worthy of being purſued with attention, ardour, and perſeverance.

To excel in preaching, it is neceſſary to have a fixed and habitual view of its end and object.

This,

This, undoubtedly, is to perſuade men to become good. Every ſermon ought, conſequently, to be a perſuaſive oration. It is not to diſcuſs ſome abſtruſe point, that the preacher aſcends the pulpit. It is not to teach his hearers ſomething new, but to make them better; to give them at the ſame time, clear views, and perſuaſive impreſſions of religious truth.

The principal characteriſtics of pulpit eloquence, as diſtinguiſhed from the other kinds of public ſpeaking, appear to be theſe two--gravity and warmth. It is neither eaſy nor common to unite theſe characters of eloquence. The grave, when it is too predominant, becomes a dull, uniform ſolemnity. The warm, when it wants gravity, approaches too near the theatrical and light. A proper union of the two, forms that character of preaching which the French call *Onction*; that affecting, penetrating, and intereſting manner, flowing from a ſtrong ſenſe in the preacher, of the importance of thoſe truths which he delivers, and an earneſt deſire that they may make full impreſſion on the hearts of his hearers.

With

With regard to the compoſition of a ſermon, a principal circumſtance which muſt be attended to, is its unity. By this we mean, that there ſhould be ſome main-point to which the whole tenour of the ſermon ſhall refer. It muſt not be a pile of different ſubjects heaped upon each other, but one object muſt predominate through the whole. Hence, however, it muſt not be underſtood, that there ſhould be no diviſions or ſeparate heads in the diſcourſe; or that one ſingle thought only ſhould be exhibited in different points of view. Unity is not confined by ſuch narrow limits; it admits of ſome variety; it requires only that union and connection be ſo far preſerved, as to make the whole concur in ſome one impreſſion on the mind. Thus, for inſtance, a preacher may employ ſeveral different arguments to enforce the love of God; he may alſo enquire into the cauſes of the decay of this virtue; ſtill one great object is preſented to the mind: But, if becauſe his text ſays, "He "that loveth God, muſt love his brother alſo," he ſhould therefore mix in the ſame diſcourſe arguments for the love of God, and for the love of our neighbour, he would offend very much againſt

againſt unity, and leave a very confuſed impreſſion on the minds of his hearers.

Sermons are always the more ſtriking, and generally the more uſeful, in proportion as the ſubject of them is more preciſe and particular. Unity can never be ſo complete in a general, as in a particular ſubject. General ſubjects, indeed, ſuch as the excellencies or the pleaſures of religion, are often choſen by young preachers as the moſt ſhowy, and the eaſieſt to be handled; and no doubt general views of religion ſhould not be neglected, ſince on ſeveral occaſions they have great propriety. But theſe ſubjects produce not the high effects of preaching. Attention is much more commanded, by taking ſome particular view of a great object, and employing on that the whole force of argument and eloquence. To recommend ſome one virtue, or inveigh againſt a particular vice, affords a ſubject not deficient in unity or preciſion; but if that virtue or vice be conſidered as aſſuming a particular aſpect, as it appears in certain characters, or affects certain ſituations in life, the ſubject becomes ſtill more intereſting. The execution is certainly leſs eaſy, but the merit and the effect are higher. A preacher

A preacher ſhould be cautious not to exhauſt his ſubject ; ſince nothing is more oppoſite to perſuaſion than an unneceſſary and tedious fulneſs. There are always ſome things which he may ſuppoſe to be known, and ſome which require only a brief attention. If he endeavour to omit nothing which his ſubject ſuggeſts, he muſt unavoidably encumber it, and debilitate its force.

To render his inſtructions intereſting to his hearers, ſhould be the grand object of every preacher. He ſhould bring home to their hearts the truths which he inculcates, and make each ſuppoſe that himſelf is particularly addreſſed. He ſhould, conſequently, avoid all intricate reaſonings ; avoid expreſſing himſelf in general ſpeculative propoſitions ; or laying down practical truths in an abſtract, metaphyſical manner. A diſcourſe ought to be carried on in the ſtrain of direct addreſs to the audience : not in the ſtrain of one writing an eſſay, but of one ſpeaking to a multitude, and ſtudying to connect what is called application, or what immediately refers to practice, with the doctrinal and didactic parts of the ſermon.

It is always highly advantageous to keep in view the different ages, characters, and conditions of men, and to accommodate directions and exhortations to each of these different classes. Whenever you advance what a man feels to touch his own character, or to be applicable to his own circumstances, you are sure of his attention. No study, therefore, is more necessary for a preacher, than the study of human life, and of the human heart. To be able to discover a man to himself, in a light in which he never saw his own character before, produces a wonderful effect. Those sermons, though the most difficult in composition, are not only the most beautiful, but also the most useful, which are founded on the illustration of some peculiar character, or remarkable piece of history, in the sacred writings; by the pursuit of which, we may trace, and lay open, some of the most secret windings of the human heart. Other topics of preaching have become trite and common; but this is an extensive field, which has hitherto been little explored, and possesses all the advantages of being curious, new, and in the highest degree useful. Bishop Butler's sermon on the *character*

of

of Balaam, is an example of this kind of preaching.

Faſhion, which operates ſo extenſively on human manners, has given to preaching, at different times, a change of character. This, however, is a torrent, which ſwells to day and ſubſides to morrow. Sometimes poetical preaching is faſhionable; ſometimes philoſophical: At one time it muſt be all pathetic; at another all argumentative; according as ſome celebrated preacher has afforded the example. Each of theſe modes in the extreme, is very defective; and he who conforms himſelf to it, will both confine his genius, and corrupt it. Truth and good ſenſe are the only baſis on which he can build with ſafety. Mode and humour are feeble and unſteady. No example, however admired, ſhould be ſervilely imitated. From various examples, the preacher may collect materials for improvement; but the ſervility of imitation will extinguiſh his genius, and expoſe its poverty to his hearers.

CONDUCT OF A DISCOURSE IN ALL ITS PARTS—INTRODUCTION—DIVISION—NARRATION AND EXPLICATION.

HAVING already conſidered what is peculiar to the three great fields of public ſpeaking; popular aſſemblies, the bar, and the pulpit; we ſhall now treat of what is common to them all; and explain the conduct of a diſcourſe, or oration, in general.

The parts which compoſe a regular formal oration, are theſe ſix; the exordium or introduction; the ſtate and the diviſion of the ſubject; narration or explication; the reaſoning or arguments; the pathetic part; the concluſion. It is not neceſſary that theſe muſt enter into every public diſcourſe, or that they muſt always be admitted in the order which we have mentioned. There are many excellent diſcourſes, in which ſome of theſe parts are altogether omitted. But as they are the natural and conſti-

tuent parts of a regular oration, and as, in every diſcourſe, ſome of them muſt occur, it is agreeable to our preſent purpoſe, to examine each of them diſtinctly.

The deſign of the introduction is to conciliate the good opinion of the hearers; to excite their attention; and to render them open to perſuaſion. When a ſpeaker is previouſly ſecure of the good will, the attention, and the docility of his audience, a formal introduction may, without any impropriety, be omitted. Reſpect for his hearers will, in that caſe, only require a ſhort exordium, to prepare them for the other parts of his diſcourſe.

The introduction, where it is neceſſary, is that part of a diſcourſe which requires no inferior care. It is always important to begin well; to make a favourable impreſſion at firſt ſetting out, when the minds of the hearers, as yet vacant and free, are more eaſily prejudiced in favour of the ſpeaker. We muſt add alſo, that a good introduction is frequently found to be extremely difficult. Few parts of a diſcourſe give more trouble to the compoſer, or require more delicacy in the execution.

An

An introduction ſhould be eaſy and natural. It ſhould always be ſuggeſted by the ſubject. The writer ſhould not plan it till after he has meditated in his own mind the ſubſtance of his diſcourſe. By taking an oppoſite courſe, and compoſing in the firſt place an introduction, the writer will often find, that he is either led to lay hold of ſome common-place topic, or that, inſtead of the introduction being accommodated to the diſcourſe, he is under the neceſſity of accommodating the whole diſcourſe to the introduction which he had previouſly written.

In this part of a diſcourſe, correctneſs of expreſſion ſhould be carefully ſtudied. This is peculiarly requiſite on account of the ſituation of the hearers. At the beginning, they are more diſpoſed to criticiſe than at any other period; they are then unoccupied with the ſubject or the arguments; their attention is entirely directed to the ſpeaker's ſtyle and manner. Care, therefore, is requiſite, to prepoſſeſs them in his favour; though too much art muſt be cautiouſly avoided, ſince it will then be more eaſily detected, and will derogate from that perſuaſion which the other parts of the diſcourſe are intended to produce.

Modeſty is alſo an indiſpenſible characteriſtic of every judicious introduction. If the ſpeaker begins with an air of arrogance and oſtentation, the ſelf-love and pride of his hearers will be preſently awakened, and will follow him with a very ſuſpicious eye through the reſt of his diſcourſe. His modeſty ſhould appear not only in his expreſſions, but in his whole manner; in his looks, in his geſtures, and in the modulation of his voice. Every audience is flattered by thoſe marks of reſpect and awe which are paid them by the perſon who addreſſes them. The modeſty, however, of an introduction, ſhould betray nothing mean or abject. Together with modeſty and deference to his hearers, the orator ſhould ſhew a certain ſenſe of dignity, ariſing from a perſuaſion of the juſtice or importance of the ſubject on which he is to ſpeak.

Except in particular caſes, the orator ſhould not put forth all his ſtrength at the beginning; but ſhould riſe and grow upon his hearers as his diſcourſe advances. The introduction is ſeldom the place for vehemence and paſſion. The audience muſt be gradually prepared, before the ſpeaker can venture on ſtrong and empaſſioned

ſen-

ſentiments. Yet when the ſubject is of ſuch a nature, that the very mention of it naturally awakens ſome paſſionate emotion; or when the unexpected preſence of ſome perſon or object, in a popular aſſembly, inflames the ſpeaker; either of theſe will juſtify an abrupt and vehement exordium. Thus the appearance of Catiline in the Roman Senate, renders the violent opening of Cicero's firſt oration againſt him very natural and proper. "Quouſque tandem, Catilina, abu-" "tere patientiâ noſtrâ?" And Biſhop Atterbury, in preaching from this text, "Bleſſed is "he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me," ventures on this bold exordium: "And can "any man then, be offended in thee, bleſſed "Jeſus?" Which addreſs to our Saviour he continues for ſome time, till he enters on the diviſion of his ſubject. But theſe introductions ſhould be attempted by very few, ſince they promiſe ſo much vehemence and ardour through the reſt of the diſcourſe, that it is extremely difficult to ſatisfy the expectation of the hearers.

An introduction ſhould not anticipate any material part of the ſubject. When topics or arguments which are afterwards to be enlarged

upon, are hinted at, and in part exhibited in the introduction, they loſe, upon their ſecond appearance, the grace of novelty. The impreſſion intended to be made by any principal idea, is always made with the greateſt advantage, when it is made entire, and in its proper place.

The laſt circumſtance which we ſhall obſerve with regard to an introduction, is, that it be proportioned both in length and in kind to the diſcourſe which follows it: In length, ſince nothing would be more abſurd than to erect an extenſive portico before a diminutive building; and in kind, ſince it would be no leſs ridiculous to load with glittering ornaments the veſtibule of a plain dwelling-houſe; or to make the approach to a monument as gay and lively as that to an arbour.

After the introduction, what generally ſucceeds next in order, is, the propoſition or enunciation of the ſubject; concerning which we ſhall only obſerve, that it ſhould be as clear and diſtinct as poſſible, and expreſſed without affectation, in the moſt conciſe and ſimple manner. To this commonly ſucceeds the diviſion, or the laying down the method of the diſcourſe; in

the

the management of which, the following rules ſhould be carefully attended to.

Firſt, That the parts into which the ſubject is divided, be really diſtinct from each other; that is, that no one include another. It were a ridiculous diviſion, for example, if a ſpeaker ſhould propoſe to explain firſt the advantages of virtue, and next, thoſe of juſtice or temperance; becauſe, the firſt head plainly comprehends the ſecond, as a genus does the ſpecies. Such a method of proceeding will, therefore, involve the ſubject in indiſtinctneſs and diſorder.

Secondly, We muſt be careful always to follow the order of nature; beginning with the moſt ſimple points, ſuch as are moſt eaſily underſtood, and neceſſary to be firſt diſcuſſed; and proceeding thence to thoſe which are built upon the former, and which ſuppoſe them to be known. The ſubject, in fine, muſt be divided into thoſe parts into which it is moſt eaſily and naturally reſolved.

Thirdly, The members of a diviſion ought to exhauſt the ſubject, otherwiſe the diviſion is incomplete; the ſubject is exhibited by pieces

and corners only, without any plan being offered by which the whole may be diſplayed.

Fourthly, Let conciſeneſs and preciſion be peculiarly ſtudied. A diviſion will always appear to the moſt advantage, when the ſeveral heads are expreſſed in the cleareſt, moſt forcible, and at the ſame time, the feweſt words poſſible. This never fails to make an agreeable impreſſion on the hearers; and contributes alſo to make the diviſions more eaſily remembered.

Fifthly, An unneceſſary multiplication of heads ſhould be cautiouſly avoided. To divide a ſubject into a great many minute parts, by endleſs diviſions and ſubdiviſions, produces always a bad effect in ſpeaking. In a logical treatiſe this may not be improper; but it renders an oration hard and dry, and unneceſſarily fatigues the memory. A ſermon may admit from three to five, or ſix heads, including ſubdiviſions; ſeldom are more allowable.

The next conſtituent part of a diſcourſe, which we mentioned, was narration or explication. Theſe two are joined together, both becauſe they fall nearly under the ſame rules, and becauſe they generally anſwer the ſame purpoſe;

ſerving

ſerving to illuſtrate the cauſe, or the ſubject of which one treats, before proceeding to argue either on one ſide or the other, or to endeavour to intereſt the paſſions of the hearers.

To be clear and diſtinct, to be probable, and to be conciſe, are the qualities which critics chiefly conſider as eſſential to narration. Diſtinctneſs is requiſite to the whole of the diſcourſe, but belongs eſpecially to narration, which ought to throw a light on all that follows. At the bar, a fact, or a ſingle circumſtance, left in obſcurity, or miſunderſtood by the judge, may deſtroy the effect of all the argument and reaſoning which the pleader employs. If his narration be improbable, it will be diſregarded; if it be tedious and diffuſe, it will fatigue, and be forgotten. To render narration diſtinct, a particular attention is requiſite in aſcertaining clearly the names, the dates, the places, and every other important circumſtance of the facts recounted. In order to be probable in narration, it is neceſſary to exhibit the characters of thoſe perſons of whom we ſpeak, and to ſhew that their actions proceed from ſuch motives as are natural, and likely to gain belief.

To be as conciſe as the ſubject will admit, all ſuperfluous circumſtances muſt be rejected, by which the narration will be rendered both more forcible and more clear.

In ſermons, explication of the ſubject to be diſcourſed on, occupies the place of narration at the bar, and is to be conducted in a ſimilar manner. It muſt be conciſe, clear, and diſtinct; in a ſtyle correct and elegant, rather than abounding with ornament. To explain the doctrine of the text with propriety; to give a full and clear account of the nature of that virtue or duty which forms the ſubject of the diſcourſe, is properly the didactic part of preaching; on the right execution of which much depends, for what comes afterwards in the way of perſuaſion. In order to ſucceed, the preacher muſt meditate profoundly on the ſubject, ſo as to place it in a clear and ſtriking point of view. He muſt conſider what light it may derive from other paſſages of ſcripture; obſerve whether it be a ſubject nearly allied to ſome other from which it ought to be diſtinguiſhed; whether it can be advantageouſly illuſtrated by comparing, or oppoſing it to ſome other thing; by ſearch

ing

ing into cauſes, or tracing effects; by pointing out examples, or appealing to the hearts of the hearers; that thus a determined, preciſe, and circumſtantial view, may be afforded of the doctrine to be inculcated. By ſuch diſtinct and apt illuſtrations of the known truths of religion, a preacher may both diſplay great merit as a compoſer, and, what is infinitely more valuable, render his diſcourſes weighty, inſtructive, and beneficial.

THE ARGUMENTATIVE PART OF A DISCOURSE—THE PATHETIC PART—THE PERORATION.

SINCE the great end for which men ſpeak on any ſerious occaſion, is to convince their hearers that ſomething is either true, or right, or good; and conſequently to influence their practice; reaſon and argument muſt conſtitute the foundation of all manly and perſuaſive eloquence.

With regard to arguments, three things are neceſſary to be obſerved: Firſt, the invention of them; ſecondly, their proper diſpoſition and arrangement; and thirdly, the expreſſing them in the moſt forcible ſtyle and manner. Invention is, undoubtedly, the moſt material, and the baſis of the reſt. But in this, art can afford only ſmall aſſiſtance. It can aid a ſpeaker, however, in arranging and expreſſing thoſe arguments which his knowledge of the ſubject has diſcovered.

Suppo-

Suppoſing the arguments properly choſen, we muſt avoid blending thoſe confuſedly together, that are of a ſeparate nature. All arguments whatever, are intended to prove one of theſe three things; that ſomething is true; that it is right or fit; or that it is profitable and good. Truth, duty and intereſt, are the three great ſubjects of diſcuſſion among mankind. But the arguments employed upon either of them are generically diſtinct; and he who mixes them all under one topic, which he calls his argument, as in ſermons is too frequently done, will render his reaſoning indiſtinct and inelegant.

With reſpect to the different degrees of ſtrength in arguments, the common rule is to advance in the way of climax, from the weakeſt to the moſt forcible. This method is to be recommended, when the ſpeaker is convinced that his cauſe is clear, and eaſy to be proved. But this rule muſt not be univerſally obſerved. If he be apprehenſive of his cauſe, and has but one material argument on which to lay the ſtreſs, putting leſs confidence in the reſt, in this caſe it is often proper to place his moſt forcible argument in the front; to prejudice his hearers as

early

early as poſſible in his favour, and diſpoſe them to pay attention to the weaker reaſoning which he may afterwards introduce. When, amidſt a variety of arguments, there is one or two more feeble than the reſt, though proper to be uſed, Cicero adviſes that they be placed in the middle, as a ſituation leſs conſpicuous than either the beginning or the end of the train of reaſoning.

When arguments are ſtrong and ſatisfactory, the more diſtant they are ſeparated, the better. Each can then bear to be introduced alone, placed in its full light, amplified and contemplated. But when they are of a doubtful or preſumptive nature, it is ſafer to crowd them together, to form them into a phalanx, that though individually weak, they may mutually ſupport each other.

Arguments ſhould never be extended too far, or multiplied too much. This ſerves rather to render a cauſe ſuſpicious, than to increaſe its ſtrength. A needleſs multiplicity of arguments, both oppreſſes the memory and diminiſhes the weight of that conviction, which a few well choſen arguments might not fail to produce. To

expand

expand them alſo, beyond the bounds of reaſonable illuſtration, is always enfeebling. When a ſpeaker endeavours to expoſe a favourable argument in every poſſible point of view, it generally happens, that, fatigued with the effort, he loſes the ſpirit with which he ſet out, and ends with feebleneſs what he began with force.

Having attended thus far to the proper arrangement of arguments, we proceed to another eſſential part of a diſcourſe, the pathetic; in which, if any where, eloquence reigns, and exerts its power. On this head we ſhall offer the following directions, which appear worthy of being remembered.

To conſider carefully, whether the ſubject admit the pathetic, and render it proper; and if it does, what part of the diſcourſe is the moſt fit for its admiſſion. In determining theſe points, good ſenſe is the only juſt criterion. Many ſubjects admit not the pathetic at all, and even in thoſe that are ſuſceptible of it, an attempt to excite the paſſions in the wrong place, may expoſe the orator to ridicule. It may in general be obſerved, that if we expect any emotion which we raiſe to have a laſting effect, we muſt ſecure

in

in our favour the underſtanding and judgment. The hearers muſt be ſatisfied, that there are ſufficient grounds for their engaging in the cauſe with zeal and ardour. When argument and reaſoning have produced their full effect, the pathetic is admitted with the greateſt force and propriety.

A ſpeaker ſhould cautiouſly avoid giving his hearers warning that he intends to excite their paſſions. Every previous preparation of this kind chills their ſenſibility. There is alſo a material difference between ſhewing mankind that they ought to be moved, and actually exciting their paſſions. To every emotion or paſſion, nature has adapted certain correſponding objects; and without ſetting theſe before the mind, it is impoſſible for an orator to excite that emotion. We are warmed with gratitude, we are touched with compaſſion, not when a ſpeaker ſhews us that theſe are noble diſpoſitions, and that it is our duty to feel them, or when he exclaims againſt us for our indifference and coldneſs. He is hitherto addreſſing only our reaſon or conſcience. He muſt paint to us the kindneſs and tenderneſs of our friend; he muſt exhibit the

diſ-

diſtreſs ſuffered by the perſon for whom he would intereſt us ; then, and not till then, our hearts begin to be touched, our gratitude or our compaſſion begin to flow. The baſis, therefore, of all ſucceſsful execution in pathetic oratory, is, to paint the object of that paſſion which we deſire to raiſe, in the moſt natural and ſtriking manner ; to deſcribe it with ſuch circumſtances as are likely to awaken it in the minds of others.

To ſucceed in the pathetic, it is neceſſary to attend to the proper language of the paſſions. This, if we conſult nature, we ſhall ever find is unaffected and ſimple. It may be animated with bold and ſtrong figures, but it will have no ornament of finery. There is a material difference between painting to the imagination, and to the heart. The one may be done with deliberation and coolneſs ; the other muſt always be rapid and ardent. In the former, art and labour may be ſuffered to appear ; in the latter, no proper effect can be produced, unleſs it ſeem to be the work of nature only. Hence all digreſſions ſhould be avoided, which may interrupt or turn aſide the ſwell of paſſion. Hence compariſons are always dangerous, and commonly quite improper

proper in the midſt of the pathetic. It is alſo to be obſerved, that emotions which are violent cannot be laſting. The pathetic, therefore, ſhould not be prolonged and extended too much. A due regard ſhould always be preſerved to what the audience will bear; for he that attempts to carry them farther in paſſion, than they will follow him, annihilates his purpoſe. By endeavouring to warm them in the extreme, he takes the ſureſt method of freezing them completely.

Concerning the peroration or concluſion of a diſcourſe, a few words will be ſufficient. Sometimes the whole pathetic part comes in moſt properly at the concluſion. Sometimes, when the diſcourſe has been altogether argumentative, it is proper to conclude with ſumming up the arguments, placing them in one point of view, and leaving the impreſſion of them, full and ſtrong, on the minds of the hearers. For the principal rule of a concluſion, and what nature obviouſly ſuggeſts, is, to place that laſt, on which we chuſe that the ſtrength of our cauſe ſhould reſt.

In every kind of public ſpeaking, it is important to hit the preciſe time of concluding,

ſo

ſo as to bring the diſcourſe juſt to a point; neither ending abruptly and unexpectedly, nor diſappointing the expectation of the hearers, when they look for the diſcourſe being finiſhed. The cloſe ſhould always be concluded with dignity and ſpirit, that the minds of the hearers may be left warm, and that they may depart with a favourable impreſſion of the ſubject and of the ſpeaker.

PRO-

PRONUNCIATION OR DELIVERY.

THE great objects to which every public ſpeaker ſhould direct his attention, in forming his delivery, are, Firſt, to ſpeak ſo as to be fully and eaſily underſtood by his hearers; and next, to expreſs himſelf with ſuch grace and energy, as to pleaſe and to move them.

To be fully and eaſily underſtood, the chief requiſites are, a due degree of loudneſs of voice, diſtinctneſs, ſlowneſs, and propriety of pronunciation.

To be heard is undoubtedly the firſt requiſite. The ſpeaker muſt endeavour to fill with his voice, the ſpace occupied by the aſſembly. Though this power of voice is, in a great meaſure, a natural talent, it may receive conſiderable aſſiſtance from art. Much depends on the proper pitch and management of the voice. This may be diſtinguiſhed by three gradations; the high, the middle, and the low one. The high is uſed in calling aloud to ſome one at a diſtance:

tance: The low approaches to a whiſper. The middle is that which is employed in common converſation, and which ſhould generally be uſed in public ſpeaking: For it is erroneous to ſuppoſe, that the higheſt pitch of the voice is requiſite to be well heard by a great aſſembly. This is confounding two things materially different, loudneſs, or ſtrength of ſound, with the key or note of which we ſpeak. The voice may be rendered louder without altering the key; and the ſpeaker will always be able to give moſt body, moſt perſevering force of ſound, to that pitch of voice to which in converſation he is accuſtomed. Whereas, if he begin on the higheſt pitch of his voice, he will fatigue himſelf, and ſpeak with pain; and whenever a man ſpeaks with pain to himſelf, he is always heard with pain by his audience. To the voice, therefore, may be given full ſtrength and ſwell of ſound; but it ſhould always be pitched on the ordinary ſpeaking key; a greater quantity of voice ſhould never be uttered than can be afforded without pain, and without any extraordinary effort. To be well heard, it is uſeful for a ſpeaker to fix his eye on ſome of the moſt

diſtant

diſtant perſons in the aſſembly, and to conſider himſelf as ſpeaking to them. We naturally and mechanically expreſs our words with ſuch a degree of ſtrength, as to be heard by one to whom we addreſs ourſelves, provided he be ſituated within the reach of our voice. This will be the caſe in public ſpeaking, as well as in common converſation. But it muſt be remembered, that ſpeaking too loud is peculiarly offenſive. The ear is wounded when the voice comes upon it in rumbling indiſtinct maſſes; beſides, it appears as if aſſent were demanded by mere vehemence and force of ſound.

To being well heard and clearly underſtood, diſtinctneſs of articulation is more conducive, perhaps, than mere loudneſs of ſound. The quantity of ſound requiſite to fill even a large ſpace; is leſs than is generally ſuppoſed; and with diſtinct articulation, a man of a weak voice will make it extend farther than the ſtrongeſt voice can reach without it. This, therefore, demands peculiar attention. The ſpeaker muſt give every ſound which he utters its due proportion, and make every ſyllable, and even every letter, be heard diſtinctly. To ſuc-

ceed

ceed in this, a rapidity of pronunciation muſt be avoided. A lifeleſs, drawling method is, however, by no means to be adopted. To pronounce with a proper degree of ſlowneſs, and with full and clear articulation, cannot be too induſtriouſly ſtudied, or too earneſtly recommended. Such a pronunciation gives weight and dignity to language. It aſſiſts the voice, by the pauſes and reſts which it permits it more eaſily to make; and enables the ſpeaker to ſwell all his ſounds, both with more energy and more muſic. He may, by this means, preſerve a due command over himſelf, and avoid that flutter of ſpirits produced by a rapid and hurried manner, which is deſtructive of all juſt and finiſhed oratory.

To propriety of pronunciation, nothing is more conducive than an attentive care in giving to every word which we utter, that ſound which the moſt polite uſage of the language appropriates to it, in oppoſition to broad, vulgar, or provincial pronunciation. On this ſubject, however, written inſtructions will avail nothing. But there is one obſervation which it may be uſeful to make: In our language, every word of more ſyllables than

than one, has one accented ſyllable. The genius of the languages requires the voice to mark that ſyllable by a ſtronger percuſſion, and to paſs more ſlightly over the reſt. The ſame accent ſhould be given to every word in public ſpeaking as in common diſcourſe. In this reſpect, many perſons are apt to err. When they ſpeak in public, and with ſolemnity, they pronounce differently from what they do at other times. They dwell upon ſyllables, and protract them; they multiply accents on the ſame word, from a falſe idea, that it gives gravity and ſtrength to their diſcourſe, and increaſes the pomp of public declamation. But this is one of the greateſt faults which can be committed in pronunciation; it conſtitutes what is termed a theatrical or mouthing manner, and gives an artificial, affected air to ſpeech, which detracts, in a great degree, from its agreeableneſs and its impreſſion.

We ſhall now mention thoſe higher parts of delivery, by ſtudying which, a ſpeaker endeavours not merely to render himſelf intelligible, but to give grace and force to what he utters. Theſe may be comprehended under four heads; emphaſis, pauſes, tones and geſtures.

By

By emphaſis is meant, a fuller and ſtronger ſound of voice, by which we diſtinguiſh the accented ſyllable of ſome word on which we intend to lay a particular ſtreſs, and to ſhew how it affects the reſt of the ſentence. To acquire the proper management of the emphaſis, the principal, and indeed the only rule which can be given is, that the ſpeaker ſtudy to acquire a juſt conception of the force and ſpirit of thoſe ſentiments which he intends to deliver. In all prepared diſcourſes, it would be extremely uſeful, if they were read over or repeated in private, with a view of ſearching for the proper emphaſis, before they were pronounced in public; marking, at the ſame time, the emphatical words in every ſentence, or at leaſt in the moſt important parts of the diſcourſe, and fixing them well in memory. A caution, however, muſt at the ſame time be given, againſt multiplying the emphatical words too much. They only become ſtriking, when uſed with a prudent reſerve. If they recur too frequently; if a ſpeaker endeavours to render every thing which he ſays of high importance, by a multitude of ſtrong emphaſes, they will ſoon fail to excite the attention of his hearers.

Next to emphaſis, pauſes demand attention: They are of two kinds; firſt, emphatical pauſes; and ſecondly, ſuch as mark the diſtinctions of ſenſe. An emphatical pauſe is made, after ſomething has been ſaid of peculiar moment, and on which we want to fix the hearer's attention. Sometimes a matter of importance is preceded by a pauſe of this nature. Such pauſes have the ſame effect as ſtrong emphaſes, and are ſubject to the ſame rules; particularly to the caution juſt now given, of not repeating them too frequently. For ſince they excite particular attention, and conſequently raiſe expectation, if this be not fully anſwered, they will occaſion diſappointment and diſguſt.

But the moſt common, and the principal uſe of pauſes, is to mark the diviſions of the ſenſe, and at the ſame time to permit the ſpeaker to draw his breath: and the juſt and graceful management of ſuch pauſes, is one of the moſt delicate and difficult articles in delivery. A proper command of the breath is peculiarly requiſite to be acquired. To obtain this, every ſpeaker ſhould be very careful to provide a full ſupply of breath for what he is to utter. It is a great miſtake to

ſup-

ſuppoſe, that the breath muſt be drawn only at the end of a period, when the voice is allowed to fall. It may be gathered at the intervals of a ſentence, when the voice ſuffers only a momentary ſuſpenſion; and hence a ſufficient ſupply may be obtained for carrying on the longeſt period, without improper interruptions.

Pauſes in public diſcourſe, muſt be formed upon the manner in which we expreſs ourſelves in common, ſenſible converſation, and not upon the ſtiff artificial manner which we acquire from peruſing books, according to the common punctuation. The general method of punctuation is very arbitrary; often capricious and falſe; and dictates an uniformity of tone in the pauſes, which is extremely unpleaſing: For it muſt be obſerved, that to make pauſes graceful and expreſſive, they muſt not only fall in the right places, but be accompanied by a proper tone of voice; by which the nature of theſe pauſes is intimated, much more than by their length, which can never be preciſely meaſured. Sometimes it is only a ſlight and ſimple ſuſpenſion of the voice which is proper; ſometimes a degree of cadence is requiſite; and ſometimes that pe-

culiar tone and cadence, which marks the conclusion of the ſentence. In all theſe caſes, a ſpeaker is to regulate himſelf by attending to the manner in which nature teaches him to ſpeak, when engaged in real and earneſt diſcourſe with others.

In reading or reciting verſes, there is a difficulty in making the pauſes with propriety. There are two kinds of pauſes which belong to the muſic of verſe; one at the end of the line, and the other in the middle of it. Rhyme always renders the former ſenſible, and compels an obſervance of it in the pronunciation. In blank verſe it is leſs perceivable; and when there is no ſuſpenſion in the ſenſe, it has been doubted, whether in reading it with propriety, any regard ſhould be paid to the cloſe of a line? On the ſtage, indeed, where the appearance of ſpeaking in verſe ſhould be avoided, the cloſe of ſuch lines as make no pauſe in the ſenſe, ſhould not be rendered perceptible to the ear. On other occaſions, it were better, for the ſake of melody, to read blank verſe in ſuch a manner as to make each line ſenſibly diſtinct. In attempting this, however, every appearance of ſing-ſong and tone

muſt

muſt be cautiouſly avoided. The cloſe of the line, where there is no pauſe in the meaning, ſhould be marked only by ſuch a ſlight ſuſpenſion of ſound, as may diſtinguiſh the paſſage from one line to another, without injuring the ſenſe.

The pauſe in the middle of the line falls after the 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th ſyllables, and no other. When it happens that this pauſe coincides with the ſlighteſt diviſion in the ſenſe, the line can be read with eaſe; as in the two firſt verſes of Pope's Meſſiah;

Ye nymphs of Solyma! begin the ſong;
To heavenly themes, ſublimer ſtrains belong.

But if it happen that words which have ſuch an intimate connexion as not to admit even a momentary ſeparation, be divided from each other by this pauſe in the middle of the verſe, we then perceive a conflict between the ſenſe and the ſound, which renders it difficult to read ſuch lines with grace and harmony. In ſuch caſes, it is always better to ſacrifice ſound to ſenſe. Thus, for inſtance, in the following line of Milton;

——————— What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raiſe and ſupport.

The ſenſe evidently dictates the pauſe after "illumine," which ought to be obſerved; though if the melody only were to be regarded, "illumine" ſhould be connected with what follows, and no pauſe be made till after the 4th or 6th ſyllable. So alſo in the following line of Pope's Epiſtle to Arbuthnot:

I ſit; with ſad civility I read.

The ear points out the pauſe as falling after "ſad," the fourth ſyllable. But to ſeparate "ſad" and "civility," would be very injudicious reading. The ſenſe allows no other pauſe than after the ſecond ſyllable, "ſit," which therefore is the only one that ought to be obſerved.

We proceed next to treat of tones in pronunciation, which are different both from emphaſis and pauſes; conſiſting in the modulation of the voice, the notes or variations of ſound which are employed in public ſpeaking. The moſt material inſtruction which can be given on this ſubject is, to form the tones of public ſpeaking upon

upon the tones of ſenſible and animated converſation. Every one who is engaged in ſpeaking on a ſubject which intereſts him nearly, has an eloquent or perſuaſive tone and manner. But when a ſpeaker departs from his natural tone of expreſſion, he is ſure to render his diſcourſe frigid and unperſuaſive. Nothing is more abſurd than to ſuppoſe, that as ſoon as a ſpeaker aſcends a pulpit, or riſes in a public aſſembly, he is immediately to lay aſide the voice with which he expreſſes himſelf in private, and to aſſume a new, ſtudied tone, and a cadence altogether different from his natural manner. This has vitiated all delivery, and has given riſe to cant and tedious monotony. Let every public ſpeaker be prepared againſt this error. Whether he ſpeak in private, or in a great aſſembly, let him not forget that he ſtill ſpeaks. Let him take nature for his guide, and ſhe will teach him to expreſs his ſentiments and feelings in ſuch a manner, as to make the moſt forcible and pleaſing impreſſion upon the minds of his hearers.

It now remains for us to treat of geſture, or what is called action, in public diſcourſe. The beſt rule is, to recommend attention to the

looks and geſture, in which earneſtneſs, indignation, compaſſion, or any other emotion, diſcovers itſelf to moſt advantage in the common intercourſe of men; and let theſe be the model for imitation. A public ſpeaker muſt, however, adopt that manner which is moſt natural to himſelf. His motions and geſtures ought all to exhibit that kind of expreſſion which nature has dictated to him; and unleſs this be the caſe, no ſtudy can prevent their appearing ſtiff and ungraceful. But though nature be the baſis on which every grace in geſture and action muſt be founded, yet the ornamental improvements which art can ſupply, muſt not be neglected. The ſtudy of action conſiſts chiefly in guarding againſt awkward and diſagreeable motions, and in learning to perform ſuch as are natural to the ſpeaker, in the moſt graceful manner. Numerous are the rules which writers have laid down for the attainment of a proper geſticulation. But it is to be feared, that written inſtructions on this ſubject can be of little ſervice. To become uſeful, they muſt be well exemplified. A few of the ſimpleſt precepts, however, may be attended to with advantage. Thus, every ſpeaker

ſhould

ſhould ſtudy to preſerve as much dignity as poſſible in the whole attitude of his body. He ſhould generally prefer an erect poſture; his poſition ſhould be firm, ſo as to have the fulleſt and freeſt command of all his motions; if any inclination be uſed, it ſhould be forward towards the hearers, which is a natural expreſſion of earneſtneſs. The countenance ſhould correſpond with the nature of the diſcourſe; and when no particular emotion is expreſſed, a ſerious and manly look is always to be preferred. The eyes ſhould never be fixed entirely on any one object, but move eaſily round the audience. In the motions made with the hands, conſiſts the principal part of geſture in ſpeaking. It is natural that the right hand ſhould be employed more frequently than the left. Warm emotions require the exerciſe of them both together. But whether a ſpeaker geſticulates with one or with both his hands, it is an important rule, that all his motions ſhould be eaſy and unreſtrained. Narrow and confined movements are uſually ungraceful; and conſequently motions made with the hands, ſhould proceed from the ſhoulder rather than from the elbow. Perpendicular movements, in

a ſtraight line up and down, which Shakſpeare calls, "Sawing the air with the hand," are to be avoided. Oblique motions are the moſt pleaſing and graceful. Too ſudden and rapid motions are ſeldom good. Earneſtneſs can be fully expreſſed without their aſſiſtance.

We cannot conclude our obſervations on this ſubject, without earneſtly admoniſhing every ſpeaker to guard againſt all affectation, which is the deſtruction of good delivery. Let his manner, whatever it be, be his own; neither imitated from another, nor taken from ſome imaginary model which is unnatural to him. Whatever is native, though attended by ſeveral defects, is likely to pleaſe; becauſe it ſhows us a man: and becauſe it has the appearance of proceeding from the heart. To attain a delivery extremely correct and graceful, is what few can expect; ſince ſo many natural talents muſt concur in its formation. But to acquire a forcible and perſuaſive manner, is within the power of the generality of mankind. They muſt only unlearn falſe and corrupt habits; they muſt follow nature; and they will ſpeak in public as they do in private, when they ſpeak in earneſt, and from the heart.

MEANS

MEANS OF IMPROVING IN ELOQUENCE.

TO thoſe who are anxious to excel in any of the higher kinds of oratory, nothing is more neceſſary than to cultivate habits of the ſeveral virtues, and to refine and improve all their moral feelings. A true orator muſt poſſeſs generous ſentiments, and a mind turned towards the admiration of all thoſe great and high objects, which mankind are, by nature, prone to venerate. Connected with the manly virtues, he ſhould have a ſtrong and tender ſenſibility to all the injuries, diſtreſſes, and ſorrows, of his fellow-creatures.

Next to moral qualifications, what is moſt requiſite for an orator is a fund of knowledge. There is no art by which eloquence can be taught, in any ſphere, without a ſufficient acquaintance with what belongs to that ſphere. Attention to the ornaments of ſtyle, can only

aſſiſt the orator in ſetting off to advantage the ſtock of materials which he poſſeſſes; but the materials themſelves muſt be derived from other ſources than from rhetoric. The pleader muſt make himſelf completely acquainted with the law; he muſt poſſeſs all that learning and experience which can be uſeful in his profeſſion, for ſupporting a cauſe, or convincing a judge. The preacher muſt apply himſelf cloſely to the ſtudy of divinity, of practical religion, of morals, of human nature; that he may be rich in all the ſubjects both of inſtruction and of perſuaſion. He who wiſhes to excel as a member of the ſupreme council of the nation, or of any public aſſembly, ſhould be minutely acquainted with the buſineſs which belongs to ſuch aſſembly, and ſhould attend with accuracy to all the facts which may be the ſubject of queſtion or deliberation.

Beſides the knowledge which is more peculiarly connected with his profeſſion, a public ſpeaker ſhould make himſelf acquainted with the general circle of polite literature. Poetry he will find uſeful for the embelliſhment of ſtyle, for affording lively images, or pleaſing illuſions.

Hiſtory

Hiſtory may be ſtill more advantageous ; ſince the knowledge of facts, of eminent characters, and of the courſe of human affairs, muſt find place on many occaſions. A deficiency of knowledge, even in ſubjects not immediately connected with his profeſſion, will expoſe a public ſpeaker to many diſadvantages, and give his rivals, who are better qualified, a decided ſuperiority.

To every one who wiſhes to excel as a public ſpeaker, a habit of application and induſtry cannot be too much recommended. This is inſeparably connected with the attainment of every ſpecies of excellence. No one ever became a diſtinguiſhed pleader, or preacher, or ſpeaker in any aſſembly, without previous labour and application. Induſtry, indeed, is not only neceſſary to every valuable acquiſition, but it is deſigned by Providence as the ſeaſoning of every pleaſure, without which life would become flat and inſipid. No enemy is ſo deſtructive both to honourable attainments, and to the real and animated enjoyment of life, as that relaxed ſtate of mind which proceeds from indolence and diſſipation. He who is deſtined to excel in any art,

will

will be diſtinguiſhed by an enthuſiaſm for that art; which firing his mind with the object in view, will diſpoſe him to endure every neceſſary degree of induſtry and perſeverance. This was the characteriſtic of the great men of antiquity; and it muſt diſtinguiſh the moderns who would imitate their bright examples. By thoſe who are ſtudying oratory, this honourable enthuſiaſm ſhould be cultivated with the moſt lively attention. If it be wanting to youth; manhood will flag exceedingly.

An attention to the beſt models contributes greatly towards improvement in the arts of ſpeaking or writing. Every one, indeed, ſhould endeavour to have ſomething that is his own, that is peculiar to himſelf, and that diſtinguiſhes his compoſition and ſtyle. Genius is certainly depreſſed, and its poverty betrayed, by a ſlaviſh imitation. But yet, there is no genius ſo original, but may receive improvement from proper examples, in ſtyle, compoſition, and delivery. They always afford ſome new ideas, and contribute to enlarge and correct our own. They accelerate the current of thought, and excite the ardour of emulation.

In

In imitating the ſtyle of any favourite author, a material diſtinction ſhould be obſerved between written and ſpoken language. Theſe are, in reality, two different modes of communicating ideas. In books, we expect correctneſs, preciſion, all redundancies pruned, all repetitions avoided, language completely poliſhed. Speaking allows a more eaſy copious ſtyle, and leſs confined by rule; repetitions may often be requiſite, parentheſes may ſometimes be ornamental; the ſame thought muſt often be exhibited in different points of view; ſince the hearers can catch it only from the mouth of the ſpeaker, and have not the opportunity, as in reading, of turning back again, and of contemplating what they do not entirely comprehend. Hence the ſtyle of ſome good authors would ſeem ſtiff, affected, and even obſcure, if transferred into a popular oration. How unnatural, for inſtance, would Lord Shaftſbury's ſentences ſound in the mouth of a public ſpeaker? Some kinds of public diſcourſe, indeed, ſuch as that of the pulpit, where a more accurate preparation and a more ſtudied ſtyle are allowable, would admit ſuch a manner better than others, which

are expected to approach nearer to extemporaneous ſpeaking. But yet there is, generally, ſo great a difference between ſpeaking, and a compoſition intended only to be read, as ſhould caution us againſt a cloſe and improper imitation.

The compoſition of ſome authors approaches nearer to the ſtyle of ſpeaking than others; and they can, therefore, be imitated with more propriety. In our own language, Swift and Bolingbroke are of this deſcription. The former, though correct, preſerves the eaſy and natural manner of an unaffected ſpeaker; and this is an excellence by which he is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed. The ſtyle of the latter is more ſplendid; but ſtill it is the ſtyle of ſpeaking, or rather of declamation. Bolingbroke, indeed, may be ſtudied with ſingular advantage by thoſe who are deſirous of attaining the natural elegance and the graces of compoſition.

Frequent exerciſe both in compoſing and ſpeaking muſt be recommended as a neceſſary mean of improvement. That kind of compoſition is, undoubtedly, moſt uſeful, which is connected with the profeſſion, or ſort of public ſpeaking, to which perſons devote themſelves.

This

This they ſhould ever keep in view, and be gradually habituating themſelves to it. At the ſame time they ſhould be cautious not to allow themſelves to compoſe negligently on any occaſion. He who wiſhes to write, or to ſpeak correctly, ſhould, in the moſt trifling kind of compoſition, in writing a letter, or even in common converſation, endeavour to expreſs himſelf with propriety. By this we do not mean, that he is never to write, or to ſpeak, but in ſtudied and artificial language. This would introduce a ſtiffneſs and affectation, infinitely worſe than the greateſt negligence. But we muſt obſerve, that there is in every thing a proper and becoming manner; and, on the contrary, there is alſo an awkward performance of the ſame thing. That manner which is becoming, is often the moſt light, and apparently the moſt careleſs; but taſte and attention are requiſite to poſſeſs the juſt idea of it. That idea, when once acquired, ſhould be kept conſtantly in view, and upon it ſhould be formed whatever we write or ſpeak.

Exerciſes of ſpeaking have always been recommended to ſtudents in elocution; and, when

under

under proper regulation, muſt, undoubtedly, be of the greateſt uſe. Thoſe public and promiſcuous ſocieties, in which numbers are brought together, who are frequently of low ſtations and occupations, who are connected by no common bond of union, except a ridiculous rage for public ſpeaking, and have no other object in view, than to exhibit their ſuppoſed talents, are inſtitutions not only of an uſeleſs, but of an injurious nature. They are calculated to become ſeminaries of licentiouſneſs, petulance, and faction. Even the allowable meetings, into which ſtudents of oratory may form themſelves, muſt be under proper direction, in order to be rendered uſeful. If their ſubjects of debate be improperly ſelected; if they ſupport extravagant or indecent topics; if they indulge themſelves in looſe and flimſy declamation; or accuſtom themſelves, without preparation, to ſpeak pertly on all ſubjects; they will unavoidably acquire a very faulty and vicious taſte in ſpeaking. It ſhould, therefore, be recommended to all thoſe who are members of ſuch ſocieties, to attend to the choice of their ſubjects; to take care that theſe be uſeful and manly, either connected

with

with the courſe of their ſtudies, or related to morals and taſte, to action and life. They ſhould be temperate in the practice of ſpeaking; not to ſpeak too frequently, nor on ſubjects of which they are ignorant; but only when they have laid up proper materials for a diſcourſe, and have previouſly conſidered and digeſted the ſubject. In ſpeaking, they ſhould be cautious always to keep good ſenſe and perſuaſion in view, rather than a ſhew of eloquence. By theſe means, they will adopt the beſt method of forming themſelves gradually to a manly, correct, and perſuaſive elocution.

It may now be aſked, of what uſe will the ſtudy of critical and rhetorical writers be, for the improvement of thoſe who wiſh to excel in eloquence? They ought certainly not to be neglected; and yet, perhaps, very much cannot be expected from them. It is, however, from the original ancient writers that the greateſt advantage can be derived; and it is a diſgrace to any one, whoſe profeſſion calls him to ſpeak in public, to be unacquainted with them. In all the rhetorical writers among the ancients, there is, indeed, one defect; they are too ſyſtematical;

they

they endeavour to perform too much ; they aim at reducing rhetoric to a perfect art, which may ſupply invention with materials on every ſubject ; ſo that one would ſuppoſe they expected to make an orator by rule, in the ſame manner as a mechanic would learn his buſineſs. But, in reality, all that can be done, is to aſſiſt and enlighten taſte, and to point out to genius the path in which it ought to tread.

Ariſtotle ſeems to have been the firſt who took rhetoric out of the hands of the ſophiſts, and founded it on reaſon and ſolid ſenſe. Some of the moſt ſubtle obſervations which have been made on the paſſions and manners of men, are to be found in his Treatiſe on Rhetoric ; though in this, as in all his writings, his great conciſeneſs often renders him obſcure. The Greek rhetoricians who ſucceeded him, moſt of whom are now loſt, improved on the foundation which he had laid. Two of them are ſtill exiſting, Demetrius Phalereus, and Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus : Both have written on the conſtruction of ſentences, and deſerve to be conſulted ; particularly Dionyſius, who is a very accurate and able critic.

To

To recommend the rhetorical writings of Cicero would be ſuperfluous. Whatever, on the ſubject of eloquence, is ſuggeſted by ſo great an orator, muſt be worthy of attention. His moſt extenſive work on this ſubject is that *De Oratore*, in three books. None of his writings are more highly finiſhed than this treatiſe. The dialogue is politely conducted, the characters are well ſupported, and the management of the whole is beautiful and pleaſing. The *Orator ad M. Brutum* is alſo a valuable treatiſe; and, indeed, throughout all Cicero's rhetorical works, there are ſeen thoſe elevated and ſublime ideas of eloquence, which are well calculated to form a juſt taſte, and to inſpire that enthuſiaſm for the art, which is highly conducive to the attainment of excellence.

Among all the ancient writers on the ſubject of oratory, none, perhaps, is more inſtructive, and more uſeful, than Quintilian. His Inſtitutions abound with valuable knowledge, and diſcover a taſte in the higheſt degree juſt and accurate. He has well digeſted the ancient ideas concerning rhetoric, and has delivered his inſtructions in elegant and poliſhed language.

COM-

COMPARATIVE MERIT OF THE ANTIENTS AND THE MODERNS.

A Very curious queſtion has been agitated, with regard to the comparative perfection of the antients and the moderns. In France this diſpute was carried on with great heat, between Boileau and Madame Dacier for the antients, and Perrault and La Motte for the moderns. Even at this day men of letters are divided on the ſubject; and it is ſomewhat difficult to diſcern, upon what grounds the controverſy is to be determined.

To decry the antient Claſſics is a vain attempt. Their reputation is eſtabliſhed upon too ſolid a foundation to be ſhaken. At the ſame time, it is obvious that imperfections may be traced in their writings. But to diſcredit their works in general, can only belong to peeviſhneſs or prejudice. The approbation of the public, for ſo many centuries, eſtabliſhes a verdict in their favour, from which there is no appeal.

In

In matters of mere reaſoning the world may be long miſtaken; and ſyſtems of philoſophy have often a currency for a time, and then die. But in objects of taſte there is no ſuch fallibility; as they depend not on knowledge and ſcience, but upon ſentiment and feeling. Now the univerſal feeling of mankind muſt be right; and Homer and Virgil muſt continue to ſtand upon the ſame ground which they have occupied ſo long.

It is true, at the ſame time, that a blind veneration ought not to be paid to the antients; and it is proper to inſtitute a fair compariſon between them and the moderns. If the antients are allowed to have the pre-eminence in genius, it is obſervable, that the moderns cannot but have ſome advantage, in all arts of which the knowledge is progreſſive.

Hence in natural philoſophy, aſtronomy, chemiſtry, and other ſciences, which reſt upon the obſervation of facts, it is undoubtedly certain, that the moderns have the ſuperiority over the antients. Perhaps too, in preciſe reaſoning, the philoſophers of the modern ages have the advantage over thoſe of antient times; as a more

extenſive

extenſive literary intercourſe has contributed to ſharpen the faculties of men. Perhaps alſo the moderns have the ſuperiority in hiſtory, as political knowledge is certainly more perfect now than of old, from the extenſion of commerce, the diſcovery of different countries, the ſuperior facility of intercourſe, and the multiplicity of events and revolutions which have taken place in the world. In poetry likewiſe ſome advantages have been gained on the ſide of regularity and accuracy. In dramatic performances, improvements have certainly been made upon the antient models. The variety of the characters is greater; a greater ſkill has been diſplayed in the conduct of the plot; and a happier attention to probability and decorum. Among the antients we find higher conceptions, greater originality, and a more fortunate ſimplicity. Among the moderns there is more art and more correctneſs, but a genius leſs forcible and ſtriking. It is notwithſtanding obſervable, that though this rule may be juſt in general, there are doubtleſs, exceptions from it. Thus it may be ſaid, that Milton and Shakſpeare are not inferior to any poet in any age.

Among

Among the antients there were many circumſtances which were favourable to the exertions of genius. They travelled much in ſearch of learning, and converſed with prieſts, poets, and philoſophers. They returned home fired with the diſcoveries and acquiſitions which they had made. Their enthuſiaſm was great; and there being few who were ſtimulated to excel as authors, the fame they procured was more intenſe and flattering. In modern times compoſition is leſs prized as an art. Every body have pretenſions to it. We write with leſs effort and more at eaſe. Printing has multiplied books ſo prodigally, that aſſiſtances are common and eaſy, and a mediocrity of genius prevails. To riſe beyond this, and to paſs beyond the crowd, is the happy pre-eminence of a choſen few.

With reſpect to epic poetry, Homer and Virgil are ſtill unrivalled; and modern times have produced no orator, who can be compared with Demoſthenes and Cicero. In hiſtory we have no modern narration that is ſo elegant, ſo picturesque and ſo animated as thoſe of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Tacitus, and Salluſt. Our dramas, with all the improvements

they have received, are inferior, in poetry and ſentiment to thoſe of Sophocles and Euripides. We have no comic dialogue ſo gracefully ſimple as that of Terence. Tibullus, Theocritus, and Horace have no counterparts in modern times. By thoſe therefore who would improve their taſte, and feed their genius, the utmoſt attention muſt be paid to the ancient claſſics, both Greek and Roman.

After having made theſe obſervations on the antients and the moderns, it may be proper to treat critically of the more diſtinguiſhed kinds of compoſition, and of the characters of thoſe writers, whether ancient or modern, who have excelled in them. Of orations and public diſcourſes much has already been ſaid. The remaining proſe compoſitions may be divided into hiſtorical writing, philoſophical writing, epiſtolary writing, and fictitious hiſtory.

HISTO-

HISTORICAL WRITING.

HISTORY may be defined to be a record of truth, for the inſtruction of mankind. Hence it follows, that the great requiſites of an hiſtorian are impartiality, fidelity, gravity, and dignity.

In the conduct of an hiſtorical detail, the attention of the hiſtorian ſhould be applied, moſt anxiouſly, to beſtow upon his work as much unity as poſſible. His hiſtory ſhould not conſiſt of ſeparate and unconnected parts. Its portions ſhould be linked together by a connecting principle, which ſhould produce in the mind the impreſſion of ſomething that is one, whole and entire. Polybius, though not an elegant writer, is remarkable for poſſeſſing this quality.

An hiſtorian ſhould trace actions and events to their ſources. He ſhould, therefore, be acquainted with human nature, and with political knowledge. His ſkill in the former will enable him to deſcribe the characters of individuals;

and his proficiency in the latter would prepare him for the taſk of recording revolutions of government, and for accounting for the operation of political cauſes on public affairs. With regard to political knowledge, the antients wanted ſome advantages which are enjoyed by the moderns. There was not, in antient periods, ſo free a communication among neighbouring ſtates, as in the modern ages. There prevailed no regular intercourſe by eſtabliſhed poſts; and there were no ambaſſadors reſiding at diſtant courts. A larger experience too, of the different modes of government, has improved the modern hiſtorian beyond the hiſtorian of antiquity.

It is, however, in the form of the narrative, and not by the affected mode of diſſertation, that the hiſtorian is to impart his political knowledge. Formal diſcuſſions expoſe the hiſtorian to the ſuſpicion of being willing to accommodate his facts to his theory. They have alſo an air of pedantry, and are an evident reſult of his want of art. For reflections, whether moral, political, or philoſophical, may be inſinuated in the ſtream and body of a narrative.

Clearneſs, order, and due connection, are great

great virtues in hiſtorical narration. They are attained when the hiſtorian is ſo completely maſter of his ſubject, as that he can ſee it at one view, and comprehend its dependence of parts. Hiſtory being a dignified ſpecies of compoſition, it ſhould alſo be conſpicuous for gravity. There ſhould be nothing mean or vulgar in the hiſtoric ſtyle; no quaintneſs, no ſmartneſs, no affectation, no wit. A hiſtory ſhould likewiſe be intereſting; and this is the circumſtence which diſtinguiſhes chiefly the genius and eloquence of the writer.

In order that an hiſtorian be intereſting, it is neceſſary, that he preſerve a proper medium between a rapid recital, and a detailed prolixity. He ſhould know when to be conciſe, and when to enlarge. He ſhould attend to a proper ſelection of circumſtances. Theſe give life, body, and colouring to his narration. They conſtitute what is termed hiſtorical painting.

In all theſe qualities of hiſtory, and particularly in pictureſque deſcription, the antients eminently excel. Hence the pleaſure of reading Thucydides, Livy, Salluſt, and Tacitus. In the talent of hiſtorical painting, there are great

varieties. Livy, for example, and Tacitus, paint in very different ways. The deſcriptions of Livy are full, plain and natural; but thoſe of Tacitus are ſhort and bold.

One embelliſhment which the moderns have laid aſide, was practiſed by the antients. This is the putting of orations into the mouths of celebrated perſonages. Theſe ſerve to diverſify hiſtory, and were conveyances for moral and political inſtruction. Thucydides was the firſt hiſtorian who followed this practice; and the orations with which his hiſtory abounds, are valuable remains of antiquity. It is doubtful, however, whether this embelliſhment ſhould be allowed to the hiſtorian: for they form a mixture that is unnatural, joining together truth and fiction. The moderns are, perhaps, more chaſte, when, on great occaſions, the hiſtorian delivers, in his own perſon, the ſentiments and reaſonings of oppoſite and contending factions.

Another ſplendid embelliſhment of hiſtory is, the delineation of characters. Theſe are conſidered as exhibitions of fine writing; and hence the difficulty of excelling in this province. For characters may be too ſhining and laboured.

The

The accompliſhed hiſtorian avoids here to dazzle too much. He is ſolicitous to give the reſemblance in a ſtyle equally removed from meanneſs and affectation. He ſtudies the grandeur of ſimplicity.

A ſound morality ſhould alſo be characteriſtic of the perfect hiſtorian. He ſhould perpetually ſhow himſelf upon the ſide of virtue. It is not, however, his province to preach; and his morality ſhould not occupy too large a proportion of his work. He ſhould excite indignatiou againſt the deſigning and the vitious; and by appeals to the paſſions, he will not only improve his reader, but take away from the natural coldneſs of hiſtorical narration.

In modern times, the hiſtorical genius has ſhone moſt in Italy. Acuteneſs, political ſagacity and wiſdom, are all conſpicuous in Machiavel, Guicciardin, Davila, Bentivoglio, and Father Paul. In Great-Britain hiſtory has only been faſhionable for a few years. For though Lord Clarendon and Burnet are very conſiderable hiſtorians, they are inferior to Hume, Gibbon, and Robertſon.

The inferior kinds of hiſtorical compoſition are annals, memoirs, and lives. Annals are a collection of facts, according to a chronological order; and the properties of an annaliſt are fidelity and diſtinctneſs. Memoirs are a compoſition which pretends not to hold out a complete detail of the period to which it relates, but only to record what the author knows in his own perſon, or from particular information concerning any certain object, tranſaction, or event. It is not, therefore, expected of ſuch a writer, that he ſhould poſſeſs that profound reſearch, and thoſe ſuperior talents, which are requiſite in an hiſtorian. It is chiefly required of him, that he ſhould be lively and intereſting. The French have put forth a flood of memoirs; the greateſt part of which are to be regarded as agreeable trifles. We muſt, however, except from this cenſure the memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz, and thoſe of the Duke of Sully. The former join to a lively narrative, great knowledge of human nature. The latter deſerve very particular praiſe. They approach to the dignity of legitimate hiſtory. They are full of virtue and good ſenſe; and are well calculated to form both

the heads and the hearts of thoſe, who are deſigned for high ſtatións in affairs, and the world.

The writing of lives, or biography, is a ſort of compoſition leſs ſtately than hiſtory; but it is, perhaps, more inſtructive. For it affords the full opportunities of diſplaying the characters of eminent men, and of entering into a thorough acquaintance with them. In this kind of writing Plutarch excels; but his matter is better than his manner; and he has no peculiar beauty or elegance. His judgment too, and accuracy, are not to be highly commended. But he is a very humane writer, and fond of diſplaying great men in the gentle lights of retirement.

It is now right to obſerve, that of late years a great improvement has been introduced into hiſtorical writing. A more particular attention than formerly has been ſhown to laws, commerce, religion, literature, and to the ſpirit and genius of nations. It is now conceived, that an hiſtorian ſhould illuſtrate manners as well as facts. The perſon who introduced this improvement into hiſtory is Voltaire; who, as an hiſtorian, has very enlarged and inſtructive views.

PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING.

OF philoſophy, the profeſſed object is to inſtruct. With the philoſopher, accordingly, ſtyle, form and dreſs, are inferior purſuits. But they muſt not wholly be neglected. For the ſame reaſonings delivered in an elegant faſhion, will ſtrike more than in a dull and dry manner.

In a philoſophical writer, the ſtricteſt preciſion and accuracy are required; and theſe qualities may be poſſeſſed without dryneſs. For there are examples of philoſophical writings that are poliſhed, neat, and elegant. It admits of the calmer figures of ſpeech, but rejects whatever is florid and tumid. Plato and Cicero have left philoſophical treatiſes, compoſed with much elegance and beauty. Seneca is too fond of an affected, a brilliant, and a ſparkling manner. In Engliſh, Mr. Locke's Treatiſe on the human Underſtanding is a model of a clear and diſtinct philoſophical ſtyle. The writings of Lord Shaftſbury, on the other hand, are dreſſed out with too much ornament and finery.

Among

Among the antients, philoſophical writing aſſumed often the form of dialogue. Plato is eminent for the beauty of his dialogues. In richneſs of imagination, no philoſophic writer, either antient or modern, is equal to him. His only fault is the exceſſive fertility of his imagination, which carries him into allegory, fiction, enthuſiaſm, and the airy regions of myſtical theology. Cicero has alſo diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his dialogues; but they are not ſo ſpirited and characteriſtical as thoſe of Plato. They are yet agreeable and well ſupported; and ſhow us how converſations were carried on among the principal perſons of ancient Rome. Of the light and humorous dialogue, Lucian is a model; and he has been imitated by modern writers. Fontenelle has written dialogues which are ſprightly and agreeable: but as for characters, whoever his perſonages be, they all become Frenchmen. The divine dialogues of Dr. Henry More, amidſt academic ſtiffneſs, are often remarkable for character and vivacity. Biſhop Berkeley's dialogues are abſtract and yet perſpicuous.

EPISTOLARY WRITING.

IN epiſtolary writing we expect familiarity and eaſe; and much of its charm depends on its introducing us into ſome acquaintance with the writer. Its fundamental requiſites are nature and ſimplicity, ſprightlineſs and wit. The ſtyle of letters, like that of converſation, ſhould flow eaſily, and ſhould indicate no mark of ſtudy. The letters of Lord Bolingbroke and of Biſhop Atterbury are maſterly. In thoſe of Mr. Pope, there is, in general, too much ſtudy; and his letters in particular to ladies, are too full of affectation. In French, Balzac and Voiture are celebrated epiſtolary writers. The former is ſwelling and pompous: the latter ſparkling and witty. Of a familiar correſpondence, the moſt accompliſhed model are the letters of Madame de Sevigne. They are eaſy, varied, lively, and beautiful. The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, though not ſo perfect, are perhaps more agreeable to the epiſtolary ſtyle, than any that have ever appeared in England.

FICTI-

FICTITIOUS HISTORY.

THIS ſpecies of compoſition includes a very numerous, and, in general, an inſignificant claſs of writings, called romances and novels. Of theſe, however, the influence is known to be great; and, indeed, notwithſtanding the bad ends to which this mode of writing may be applied, it is very poſſible to employ it for the moſt uſeful purpoſes. Romances and novels deſcribe human life and manners, and diſcover the diſorders, as well as the perfections, of the paſſions. Even wiſe men, in different nations, have uſed fables and fictions for the propagation of knowledge; and it is an obſervation of Lord Bacon, that the common affairs of the world are inſufficient to engage the mind of man. He muſt create worlds of his own, and wander in the regions of imagination.

All nations whatſoever have diſcovered talents for invention, and the love of fiction. Among the Greeks we hear of the Ionian and Mileſian tales. During the dark ages, fictions

aſſumed

aſſumed an unuſual form from the prevalence of chivalry, Romances aroſe, and carried the marvellous to its higheſt ſummit. They exhibited knights as patterns not only of the moſt heroic courage, but as ſuperlatively eminent for religion, generoſity, courteſy, and fidelity; and ladies, who were diſtinguiſhed, in the greateſt degree, for modeſty, delicacy, and dignity of manners. Of theſe romances the moſt perfect model is the Orlando Furioſo. But as magic and enchantment came to be diſbelieved and ridiculed, the chivalerian romances were diſcontinued, and were ſucceeded by a new ſpecies of fictitious writing.

Of the ſecond ſtage of romance writing, the Cleopatra of Madame Scuderi, and the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sydney, are good examples. In theſe, however, there was ſtill too large a proportion of the marvellous; and the books were too voluminous and unwieldy. Romance writing appeared, therefore, in a new form. It dwindled down to the familiar novel. Intereſting ſituations in real life are the ground work of novel writing. Upon this plan the French have produced works of great merit. Such is the Gil

Blas

Blas of Le Sage, the Marianne of Marivaux, and the Nouvelle Heloiſe of Rouſſeau.

In this mode of writing the Engliſh are inferior to the French; yet in this way we have performances which diſcover the ſtrength of the Britiſh genius. Robinſon Cruſoe is a well conducted fiction. Mr. Fielding's novels are diſtinguiſhed for their humour, and for a boldneſs of character. Mr. Richardſon, the author of Clariſſa, is the moſt moral of all our writers; but he poſſeſſes the unfortunate talent of ſpinning out his books into an immeaſurable length. As to the common run of performances, under the titles of lives, adventures, and hiſtories, they are moſt inſipid; and it is too often their tendency to deprave the morals, and to encourage diſſipation and idleneſs.

NA-

NATURE OF POETRY.

Its ORIGIN and PROGRESS; VERSIFICATION.

WHAT, it may be aſked, is poetry? and how does it differ from proſe? Many diſputes have been maintained among the criticks upon theſe queſtions. The eſſence of poetry is ſuppoſed by Ariſtotle, Plato, and others, to conſiſt in fiction. This deſcription, however, has been eſteemed to be imperfect and limited. Many account the characteriſtic of poetry to be imitation. But an imitation of human manners and characters may be carried on in proſe.

Perhaps it is the beſt definition of poetry, "that it is the language of paſſion, or of enli-"vened imagination, formed moſt commonly "into regular numbers." As the primary aid of the poet is to pleaſe and to move, it is to the imagination and the paſſions that he addreſſes himſelf. With him, inſtruction and reformation are ſecondary conſiderations.

It

It has been ſaid, that poetry is older than proſe; and the poſition is certainly true. In the very beginning of ſociety there were occaſions upon which men met together at feaſts and ſacrifices, when muſic, dance, and ſong, were the chief entertainment. The meetings of the northern tribes of America, are diſtinguiſhed by muſic and ſong. By ſongs they celebrate their religious ceremonies, and their martial atchievements. And it is in ſuch ſongs which characterize the infancy of all nations, that there may be traced the beginnings of poetic compoſition.

Man is by nature both a poet and a muſician. The ſame impulſe which produces an enthuſiaſtic poetic ſtyle, produces a high modulation of ſound. Muſic and poetry are united in ſong; and they mutually aſſiſt and exalt each other. The firſt poets ſung their own verſes; and hence the origin of what is called verſification, or the arrangement of words to ſome tune or melody.

Poets and ſongs are the firſt objects that make their appearance in any nation. Apollo, Orpheus, and Amphion, were the firſt tamers of mankind among the Greeks. The Gothic nations had their ſcalders, or poets. The Celtic

tribes

tribes had their bards. Poems and ſongs are among the antiquities of all countries; and the occaſions of their being compoſed are nearly the ſame. They comprize the celebration of gods, and heroes, and victories. They abound in fire and enthuſiaſm; and they are wild, irregular, and glowing.

It is in the progreſs of ſociety that poems aſſume different forms. Time ſeparates into claſſes the different kinds of poetic compoſition. A peculiar merit, and certain rules, are aſſigned to each. The ode and the elegy, the epic poem, and dramatic compoſitions, are all reduced to regulations, and exerciſe the acuteneſs of criticiſm.

ENGLISH VERSIFICATION.

MERE quantity is of very little effect in Engliſh verſification. For the difference made between long and ſhort ſyllables, in our manner of pronouncing them, is very inconſiderable. The only perceptible difference among our ſyllables, is occaſioned by ſome of them being pronounced with that ſtronger percuſſion of voice, which is termed accent. This accent, however, does not always make the ſyllable longer. It communicates only more force of ſound; and it is upon a certain order and ſucceſſion of accented and unaccented ſyllables, more than upon their being ſhort or long, that the melody of our verſe depends.

In the conſtitution of our verſe there is another eſſential circumſtance. This is the cæſural pauſe which falls towards the middle of each line. This pauſe may fall after the fourth, the fifth, the ſixth, or the ſeventh ſyllable; and by this means uncommon variety and richneſs are added to Engliſh verſification.

When

When the pauſe falls earlieſt, it is upon the fourth ſyllable; and in this caſe, a ſpirited air is given to the line. Of this, the following lines from Mr. Pope, are a proper illuſtration:

On her white breaſt | a ſparkling croſs ſhe wore,
Which Jews might kiſs, | and Infidels adore:
Her lively looks | a ſprightly mind diſcloſe,
Quick as her eyes, | and as unfix'd as thoſe.
Favours to none, | to all ſhe ſmiles extends,
Oft ſhe rejects, | but never once offends.

When the pauſe falls after the fifth ſyllable, which divides equally the line, the melody is ſenſibly altered. The verſe loſing the briſk air of the former pauſe, becomes more ſmooth and flowing.

Eternal ſunſhine | of the ſpotleſs mind,
Each prayer accepted, | and each wiſh reſign'd.

When the pauſe follows the ſixth ſyllable, the melody grows grave. The march of the verſe is more ſolemn and meaſured.

The wrath of Peleus' ſon, | the direful ſpring
Of all the Grecian woes, | O Goddeſs ſing!

The grave cadence becomes ſtill more ſenſible, when the pauſe follows the ſeventh ſyllable.

This

This kind of verſe, however, occurs the moſt ſeldom. Its effect is to diverſify the melody of long poems.

And in the ſmooth deſcriptive | murmur ſtill.
Long loved, adored ideas, | all adieu.

Our blank verſe is a bold and diſencumbered mode of verſification. It is free from the full cloſe which rhyme forces upon the ear at the termination of every couplet. Hence it is peculiarly ſuited to ſubjects of dignity and force. It is more favourable than rhyme to the ſublime, and the highly pathetic. It is the moſt proper for an epic poem, and for tragedy. Rhyme finds a proper place in the middle regions of poetry; and blank verſe in the higheſt.

The preſent form of our Engliſh heroic rhyme in couplets is modern. For the meaſure of verſification in uſe in the days of Elizabeth, King James, and Charles I. was the ſtanza of eight lines. Waller was the firſt who gave the faſhion to couplets; and Dryden eſtabliſhed the uſage. Waller harmonized our verſe; and Dryden carried it to perfection. The verſification of Pope is peculiar. It is flowing and ſmooth, cor-

rect

rect and laboured, in the higheſt degree. He has thrown totally aſide the triplets, which are ſo common in Dryden, and the older poets. As to eaſe and variety, Dryden excels Pope. He makes his couplets to run into one another, and has ſomewhat of the freedom of blank verſe.

PAS-

PASTORAL POETRY.

IT was not till men had begun to aſſemble in great cities, and the buſtle of courts and large ſocieties was known, that paſtoral poetry aſſumed its preſent form. From the tumult of a city life, men looked back with complacency to the innocence of a country retirement. In the court of King Ptolemy, Theocritus wrote the firſt paſtorals with which we are acquainted; and in the court of Auguſtus, Virgil imitated him.

The paſtoral is a very agreeable ſpecies of poetry. It lays before us the gay and pleaſing ſcenes of nature. It recalls the objects which commonly are the delight of our childhood and youth. It gives us the image of a life, to which we join the ideas of innocence, peace, virtue, and leiſure. It tranſports us into the calm Elyſian regions. It holds out many objects favourable to poetry; rivers and mountains, meadows and hills, rocks, trees, and ſhepherds.

The

The paſtoral poet is careful to exhibit whatever is moſt pleaſing in the paſtoral ſtate. He paints its ſimplicity, its tranquillity, and happineſs; but conceals its rudeneſs and miſery. His pictures are not thoſe of real life. It is ſufficient that they reſemble it. He has occaſion, accordingly, for great art. And to have a proper idea of paſtoral poetry, we muſt conſider, 1. The ſcenery. 2. The characters; and laſtly, the ſubjects which it exhibits.

The ſcene muſt be ever in the country; and the poet muſt have a talent for deſcription. In this reſpect Virgil is outdone by Theocritus, whoſe paintings are richer and more pictureſque. In every paſtoral, a rural proſpect ſhould be drawn with diſtinctneſs. It is inſipid to have unmeaning groups of roſes and violets, of birds, breezes, and brooks. A good poet gives a landſcape that would figure on canvas. His objects are particulariſed. They cannot be miſtaken, and afford to the mind clear and pleaſing conceptions.

In his alluſions to natural objects, as well as in profeſſed deſcriptions of the ſcenery, the poet ſhould alſo be clear and various. He muſt diver-

ſify

ſify his face of nature. It is likewiſe a rule with him, to ſuit his ſcenery to the ſubject of the paſtoral; and to ſhow nature under the forms that moſt accurately correſpond with the emotions and ſentiments he deſcribes. Thus Virgil, when he gives the lamentation of a deſpairing lover, communicates a gloomy ſadneſs to the ſcene.

Tantum inter denſas, umbroſa cacumina, fagos,
Aſſiduè veniebat; ibi hæc incondita ſolus
Montibus & ſylvis ſtudio jactabit inani.

As to the characters in paſtorals, it is not ſufficient that they are perſons who reſide conſtantly in the country. Courtiers and citizens, who reſort occaſionally to retirements, would not figure in paſtorals. The perſons in ſuch poems muſt be actually ſhepherds, and wholly engaged in rural occupations. The ſhepherd muſt be plain and unaffected, without being dull or inſipid. He muſt have good ſenſe, and even vivacity. He muſt be tender and delicate in his feelings. He ſhould never deal in general reflections or in conceits, for theſe are conſequences of refinement. When Aminta, in Taſſo, is diſentangling his miſtreſs's hair from the tree to

which a ſavage had bound it, he is made to ſay, "Cruel tree! how couldſt thou injure that "lovely hair, which did thee ſo much honour? "Thy rugged trunk was not worthy of ſuch "lovely knots. What have the ſervants of "love, if thoſe precious chains are common to "them, and to the trees." Strained and forced ſentiments like theſe, ſuit not the woods. The language of rural perſonages is that of plain good ſenſe, and natural feeling. Hence the charm of the following lines in Virgil:

Sepibus in noſtris parvam te roſcida mala
(Dux ego veſter eram) vidi cum matre legentem;
Alter ab undecimo tum me jam ceperat annus.
Jam fragiles poteram à terra contingere ramos.
Ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abſtulit error.

Once with your mother to our fields you came
For dewy apples: thence I date my flame;
The choiceſt fruit I pointed to your view,
Tho' young my raptur'd ſoul was fix'd on you;
The bough I juſt could reach with little arms;
But then, even then, could feel thy powerful charms.
O how I gaz'd in pleaſing tranſport toſt!
How glow'd my heart, in ſweet deluſion loſt!

With reſpect to the ſubjects of paſtorals, there is a nicety which is abſolutely neceſſary.

For

For it is not enough, that the poet ſhould give us ſhepherds diſcourſing together. Every good poem muſt have a topic that ſhould be intereſting in ſome way. In this lies the difficulty of paſtoral poetry. The active ſcenes of country life are too barren of incidents. The condition of a ſhepherd has few things in it that produce curioſity and ſurprize. Hence the generality of paſtorals are common place, and impertinently inſipid. Yet this inſipidity is not ſolely to be aſcribed to the barrenneſs of topicks. It is, in a great meaſure, the fault alſo of the poet. For human paſſions are much the ſame in every ſituation and rank of life. And what an infinite variety of objects within the rural ſphere do the paſſions preſent! The ſtruggles and ambition of ſhepherds; their adventures; their diſquiets and felicity; the rivalſhip of lovers; unexpected ſucceſſes and diſaſters are all proper topicks for the paſtoral muſe.

Theocritus and Virgil are at the head of this mode of writing. For the ſimplicity of his ſentiments, the harmony of his numbers, and the richneſs of his ſcenery, the former is diſtinguiſhed. But he deſcends ſometimes into ideas

that are mean, abuſive, and immodeſt. Virgil, on the contrary, has all the paſtoral ſimplicity and grace, without any offenſive ruſticity.

The modern writers of paſtorals have, in general, imitated Theocritus and Virgil. Sannazarius, however, a Latin poet, in the age of Leo X. attempted a bold innovation, by compoſing piſcatory eclogues, and changing the ſcene from woods to the ſea, and from ſhepherds to fiſhermen. But this attempt was unhappy, and he has had no imitators. The toilſome life of the fiſherman had nothing agreeable to preſent to the imagination. Fiſh and marine productions had nothing poetical in them. Of all the moderns, Geſner, a poet of Switzerland, has been the moſt happy. There are many new ideas in his Idyls. His ſcenery is ſtriking, and his deſcriptions are lively. He is pathetic, and writes to the heart. Neither the paſtorals of Mr. Pope, nor Mr. Philips, are a great acquiſition to Engliſh poetry. The paſtorals of Pope are wonderfully barren; and their chief merit is the ſmoothneſs of their verſification. Philips attempted to be more natural than Pope; but wanted genius to ſupport his attempt. His topicks, like thoſe of Pope, are beaten; and inſtead

ſtead of being natural or ſimple, he is inſipid and flat. Between theſe authors there was a ſtrong competition; and in ſome papers of the Guardian a partiality was ſhown to Philips. This offended Pope, who procured a paper to be inſerted in that work *, in which he affected to carry on the plan of extolling Philips, but in which he ſatirized him moſt ſeverely with ironical compliments, and pointed to his own ſuperiority over that poet. The Shepherd's Week of Mr. Gay was deſigned as a ridicule on Philips; and is an ingenious burleſque of paſtoral writing, when it copies too completely the manners of clowns and ruſtics. As to Mr. Shenſtone's paſtoral ballad, it is one of the moſt elegant poems in the Engliſh language.

In latter times, the paſtoral writing has been extended into a play, or drama; and this is one of the chief improvements that have been made upon it. Two pieces of this kind are highly celebrated; Guarini's Paſtor Fido, and Taſſo's Aminta. Both poſſeſs great beauties; but the latter is the preferable poem, as being leſs intricate, and leſs affected. It is yet not wholly free

* Guardian, No. 40.

from Italian refinement. As a poem it has, however, great merit. The poetry is pleaſing and gentle; and the Italian language has communicated to it that ſoftneſs, which is ſo ſuited to the paſtoral.

The Gentle Shepherd of Allan Ramſay is a paſtoral compoſition which muſt not be omitted. To this admirable poem it is perhaps a diſadvantage, that it is written in the old ruſtic dialect of Scotland, which muſt be ſoon obſolete: and it is further to be objected to it, that it is formed ſo accurately on the rural manners of Scotland, that a native alone of that country can thoroughly enter into, and reliſh it. Of natural deſcription it is full; and it excels in tenderneſs of ſentiment. The characters are drawn with a ſkilful pencil, the incidents are affecting, and the ſcenery and manners are lively and juſt.

LYRIC

LYRIC POETRY.

THE ode is a ſpecies of poetry which preſerves dignity, and in which many poets in every age have exerciſed themſelves. Ode is, in Greek, equivalent with ſong or hymn ; and lyric poetry implies, that the verſes are accompanied with a lyre, or with a muſical inſtrument. The ode retains its firſt and moſt antient form ; and ſentiments of ſome kind or other conſtitute its ſubject. It recites not actions. Its ſpirit, and the manner of its execution, give it its chief value. It admits of a bolder and more paſſionate ſtrain, than is allowed in ſimple recitations. Hence the enthuſiaſm that belongs to it. Hence that neglect of regularity, and that diſorder it is ſuppoſed to admit.

There are four denominations under which all odes may be claſſed. 1. Hymns addreſſed to the Supreme Being, and relating to religious ſubjects. 2. Heroic odes, which concern the celebration of heroes, and great actions. 3. Moral and philoſophical odes, which refer chiefly

to virtue, friendſhip, and humanity. 4. Feſtive and amorous odes, which are calculated for pleaſure and amuſement.

As enthuſiaſm is conſidered as the characteriſtic of the ode, it has too much degenerated into licentiouſneſs; and this ſpecies of writing has, above all others, been infected with the want of order, method, and connexion. The poet is out of ſight in a moment. He is ſo abrupt and eccentric, ſo irregular and obſcure, that we cannot partake of his raptures. It is not indeed neceſſary, that the ſtructure of the ode ſhould be ſo perfectly exact and formal as a didactic poem. But in every work of genius there ought to be a whole, and this whole ſhould conſiſt of parts. Theſe parts too ſhould have a bond of connexion. In the ode, the tranſitions from thought to thought may be briſk and rapid, but the connexion of ideas ſhould be preſerved; and the author ſhould think, and not rave.

Pindar, the father of lyric poetry, has led his imitators into wildneſs and enthuſiaſtic fury. They imitate his diſorder without catching his ſpirit. In Horace every thing is correct, harmonious, and happy. His elevation is moderate

and

and not rapturous. Grace and elegance are his characteriſtics. He ſupports a moral ſentiment with dignity, touches a gay one with felicity, and has the art to trifle moſt agreeably. His language too is moſt fortunate.

The Latin poets, of later ages, have imitated him; and ſometimes happily. Caſimir, a Poliſh poet of the laſt century, is of the number of his imitators; and diſcovers a conſiderable degree of original genius, and poetical fire. He is, however, far inferior to the Roman. Buchanan, in his lyric compoſitions, is greater, and more claſſical.

In the French, the odes of Jean Baptiſte Rouſſeau are juſtly celebrated for great beauty of ſentiment and expreſſion. In our own language, Dryden's ode on St. Cecilia is well known. Mr. Gray, in ſome of his odes, is celebrated for tenderneſs and ſublimity; and in Dodſley's Miſcellanies, there are ſeveral very beautiful lyric poems. As to profeſſed Pindaric odes, they are ſeldom intelligible. Cowley is doubly harſh in his Pindaric compoſitions. His Anacreontic odes are better; and perhaps the moſt agreeable and perfect in their kind, of all his works.

DIDACTIC POETRY.

OF didactic poetry, it is the expreſs intention to convey inſtruction and knowledge. A didactic poem may be executed in different ways. The poet may treat ſome inſtructive ſubject in a regular form; or without intending a great or regular work, he may inveigh againſt particular vices, or preſs ſome moral obſervations on human life and characters.

The higheſt ſpecies of didactic compoſition, is a formal treatiſe on ſome philoſophical or grave ſubject. Such are the books of Lucretius de Rerum Naturâ, the Georgics of Virgil, the Eſſay on Criticiſm by Mr. Pope, the Pleaſures of the Imagination by Akenſide, Armſtrong on Health, and the Art of Poetry by Horace, Vida, and Boileau.

In all theſe works inſtruction is the profeſſed object. It is neceſſary, however, that the poet enliven his leſſons by figures, and incidents, and poetical painting. In his Georgics, Virgil has the moſt common circumſtances in rural life.

When

When he is to ſay that the labour of the farmer muſt begin in ſpring, he expreſſes himſelf in the following manner:

Verè novo, gelidus canis cum montibus humor
Liquitur, & Zephyro putris ſe gleba reſolvit;
Depreſſo incipiat jam tum mihi Taurus aratro
Ingemere, & fulco attritus ſplendeſcere vomer.

While yet the ſpring is young, while earth unbinds
Her frozen boſom to the weſtern winds;
While mountain ſnows diſſolve againſt the ſun,
And ſtreams yet new from precipices run:
Even in this early dawning of the year,
Produce the plough, and yoke the ſturdy ſteer,
And goad him till he groans beneath his toil,
Till the bright ſhare is buried in the ſoil.

In all didactic works, ſuch a method and order are requiſite, as ſhall exhibit clearly a connected train of inſtruction. With regard to epiſodes and embelliſhments, the writers of didactic poetry may indulge in great liberties. For in a poetical performance, a continued ſeries of inſtruction, without entertaining embelliſhments, would fatigue, and even diſguſt. The digreſſions in the Georgics of Virgil are all admirable. The happineſs of a country life, the fable of Ariſteus, and the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, cannot be praiſed too much.

A didactic poet ought alſo to exert his ſkill in connecting his epiſodes with his ſubjects. In this addreſs Virgil is eminent. Among modern didactic poetry, Dr. Akenſide and Dr. Armſtrong are deſervedly illuſtrious. The former is very rich and poetical; but the latter maintains a greater equality, and is throughout remarkable for a chaſte and correct elegance.

Of didactic poetry, ſatires and epiſtles run into the moſt familiar ſtyle. It is probable, that the ſatire is a relic of the ancient comedy, the groſsneſs of which was corrected by Ennius and Lucilius. It was Horace who brought it to the perfection in which we now behold it. Vice and vitious characters are its objects, and it profeſſes the reformation of manners. There are three different modes in which it appears in the writings of Horace, Juvenal, and Perſius.

The ſatires of Horace have not much elevation. They exhibit a meaſured proſe. Eaſe and grace characterize him; and he glances rather at the follies and weakneſſes of mankind, than their vices. He ſmiles while he reproves. He moralizes like a ſound philoſopher, with the politeneſs of a courtier. Juvenal is more declamatory

matory and ſerious; and has greater ſtrength and fire. Perſius has diſtinguiſhed himſelf by a noble and ſublime morality.

Poetical epiſtles, when employed on moral and critical topics, have a reſemblance in the ſtrain of their poetry to ſatires. But in the epiſtolary form many other ſubjects may be treated. Love poetry, or elegiac, may, for example, be carried on in this mode. The ethical epiſtles of Pope are a model: and he ſhews in them the ſtrength of his genius. Here he had a full opportunity for diſplaying his judgment and wit, his conciſe and happy expreſſion, together with the harmony of his numbers. His imitations of Horace are ſo happy, that it is difficult to ſay whether the original or the copy is the moſt to be admired.

Among moral and didactic writers, Doctor Young ought not to be paſſed over in ſilence. Genius appears in all his works; but his Univerſal Paſſion may be conſidered as poſſeſſing the full merit of that conciſeneſs which is particularly requiſite in ſatirical and didactic productions. At the ſame time it is to be obſerved, that his wit is often too ſparkling, and that his ſentences

tences are ſometimes too conciſe. In his Night Thoughts there is great energy of expreſſion, ſeveral pathetic paſſages, many happy images, and many pious reflections. But it muſt be allowed, that he is frequently overſtrained and turgid, harſh and obſcure.

DESCRIP-

DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

IT is in deſcriptive poetry, that the higheſt exertions of genius may be diſplayed. In general, indeed, deſcription is introduced as an embelliſhment, and conſtitutes not, properly any particular ſpecies or mode of compoſition. It is the teſt of a poet's imagination, and never fails to diſtinguiſh the original from the ſecond-rate genius. A writer of an inferior claſs, ſees nothing new or peculiar in the object he would paint: he is looſe and vague; feeble and general. A true poet, on the contrary, places an object before our eyes. He gives it the colouring of life, and the painter might copy from him.

The great art of pictureſque deſcription lies in the ſelection of circumſtances. Theſe ought never to be vulgar or common. They ſhould mark ſtrongly the object. For all diſtinct ideas are formed upon particulars. There ſhould alſo be a uniformity in the circumſtances which are ſelected. In deſcribing a great object, all the

cir-

circumſtances brought forward ſhould lift and aggrandize; and in holding out a gay object, all the circumſtances ſhould tend to beautify.

The largeſt and fulleſt deſcriptive performance, in our language, is the Seaſons of Thomſon; a work which poſſeſſes very uncommon merit. The ſtyle is ſplendid and ſtrong, but ſometimes harſh and indiſtinct. He is an animated and beautiful deſcriber, and poſſeſſed a feeling heart, and a warm imagination. He had ſtudied nature with great care; was enamoured of her beauties; and had the happy talent of painting them like a maſter. To ſhew the power of a ſingle well-choſen circumſtance to heighten a deſcription, the following paſſage may be appealed to, in his Summer, where, relating the effects of heat in the torrid zone, he is led to take notice of the peſtilence that deſtroyed the Engliſh fleet at Carthagena, under Admiral Vernon.

——— You gallant Vernon, ſaw
The miſerable ſcene; you pitying ſaw,
To infant weakneſs ſunk the warrior's arm;
Saw the deep racking pang; the ghaſtly form;
The lip pale quiv'ring; and the beamleſs eye
No more with ardour bright; you heard the groans

Of

Of agonizing ſhips from ſhore to ſhore ;
Heard nightly plunged, amid the ſullen waves,
The frequent corſe.———

All the circumſtances ſelected here contribute to augment the diſmal ſcene. But the laſt image is the moſt ſtriking in the picture.

Of deſcriptive narration, there are beautiful examples in Mr. Parnell's Tale of the Hermit. The ſetting forth of the hermit to viſit the world, his meeting with a companion, the houſes in which they are entertained, of the vain man, the covetous man, and the good man, are pieces of highly-finiſhed painting. But the richeſt and the moſt remarkable of all the deſcriptive poems in the Engliſh language, are the Allegro and the Penſeroſo of Milton. They are the ſtorehouſe from whence ſucceeding poets have enriched their deſcriptions, and are to be conſidered as inimitably fine poems. Take, for inſtance, the following lines from the Penſeroſo :

——— I walk unſeen
On the dry, ſmooth-ſhaven green,
To behold the wandering moon
Riding near her higheſt noon ;

And

And oft, as if her head ſhe bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft on a plat of riſing ground,
I hear the far off curfew ſound,
Over ſome wide watered ſhore,
Swinging ſlow with ſolemn roar:
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some ſtill removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;
Far from all reſort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowſy charm,
To bleſs the doors from nightly harm;
Or let my lamp at midnight hour
Be ſeen in ſome high lonely tower,
Exploring Plato to unfold
What worlds, or what vaſt regions hold
Th' immortal mind that hath forſook
Her manſion in this fleſhly nook;
And of theſe dæmons that are found
In fire, in air, flood, or under ground.

All here is particularly pictureſque, expreſſive, and conciſe. One ſtrong point of view is exhibited to the reader; and the impreſſion made is lively and intereſting.

Both Homer and Virgil excel in poetical deſcription. In the ſecond Æneid, the ſacking of Troy is ſo particularly deſcribed, that the

reader

reader finds himſelf in the midſt of the ſcene. The death of Priam is a maſter-piece of deſcription. Homer's battles are wonderful, and univerſally known. Oſſian too paints in ſtrong colours, and is remarkable for touching the heart. He thus pourtrays the ruins of Balclutha: "I "have ſeen the wälls of Balclutha, but they "were deſolate. The fire had reſounded within "the halls; and the voice of the people is now "heard no more. The ſtream of Clutha was "removed from its place, by the fall of the "walls; the thiſtle ſhook there its lonely head; "the moſs whiſtled to the wind. The fox "looked out of the window; the rank graſs "waved round his head. Deſolate is the dwell-"ing of Moina; ſilence is in the houſe of her "fathers."

Upon a proper choice of epithets, there depends much of the beauty of deſcriptive poetry. With regard to this, poets are too often careleſs; and hence the multitude of unmeaning and redundant epithets. Hence the "Liquidi Fontes" of Virgil, and the "Prata Canis Albicant "Pruinis" of Horace. Every epithet ſhould add a new idea to the word which it qualifies. To

obſerve

obſerve that water is liquid, and that ſnow is white, is little better than mere tautology. But the propriety and advantage of an ingenious ſelection of epithets, will appear beſt from an example; and the following lines from Milton will afford one:

— Who ſhall tempt with wand'ring feet
The dark, unbottom'd, infinite abyſs,
And through the palpable obſcure, find out
This uncouth way? Or ſpread his airy flight,
Upborn with indefatigable wings,
Over the vaſt abrupt?

It is obvious, that the deſcription here is very conſiderably aſſiſted by the epithets. The wandering feet, the unbottomed abyſs, the palpable obſcure, the uncouth way, the indefatigable wing, are all very happy expreſſions.

THE

THE POETRY OF THE HEBREWS.

IN treating of the different kinds of poetry, that of the Scriptures deſerves a place. In this taſk, Dr. Lowth on the poetry of the Hebrews is an excellent guide; and it may be proper, that we benefit by the obſervations of a writer ſo ingenious.

Among the Hebrews poetry was cultivated from the earlieſt times. Its general conſtruction muſt not be judged of by the poems of other nations. It is ſingular and peculiar. It conſiſts in dividing every period into correſpondent, for the moſt part into equal numbers, which anſwer to one another, both in ſenſe and ſound. A ſentiment is expreſſed in the firſt member of the period; and in the ſecond member the ſame ſentiment is amplified, or ſometimes contraſted with its oppoſite. Thus, "Sing unto the Lord "a new ſong---Sing unto the Lord all the "earth. Sing unto the Lord, and bleſs his "name — ſhew forth his ſalvation from day to day.

" day. Declare his glory among the heathen
" —his wonders among all the people."

This form of poetical compoſition is to be deduced from the manner in which the Hebrews ſung their ſacred hymns. Theſe were accompanied with muſic, and were performed by bands of ſingers and muſicians, who anſwered alternately to each other. One band began the hymn thus: " The Lord reigneth, let the earth re-
" joice;" and the chorus, or ſemi-chorus, took up the correſponding verſicle: " Let the multi-
" tudes of the iſles be glad thereof."

But independent of its peculiar mode of conſtruction, the ſacred poetry is diſtinguiſhed by the higheſt beauties of figure and expreſſion. Conciſeneſs and ſtrength are two of its moſt remarkable characters. The ſentences are always ſhort. The ſame thought is never dwelt upon long. Hence the ſublimity of the poetry of the Hebrews.

To underſtand the deſcription of natural objects in the Scriptures, it is neceſſary to attend to particular circumſtances of the land of Judæa. Throughout all that region, little or no rain falls during the ſummer months. Hence to re-

preſen

preſent diſtreſs, there are frequent alluſions to a dry and thirſty land, where no water is; and hence to deſcribe a change from diſtreſs to proſperity, their metaphors are founded on the falling of ſhowers, and the burſting out of ſprings. Thus in Iſaiah, "The wilderneſs and the ſoli-" tary place ſhall be glad, and the deſert ſhall " rejoice and bloſſom as the roſe. For in the " wilderneſs ſhall waters break out, and ſtreams " in the deſert; and the parched ground ſhall " become a pool; and the thirſty land, ſprings " of water; in the habitation of dragons there " ſhall be graſs, with ruſhes and reeds."

The compariſons employed by the ſacred poets are generally ſhort. They are, of conſequence, the more ſtriking. Of this the following is a good example: "He that ruleth over " man muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of God: " and he ſhall be as the light of the morning, " when the ſun riſeth, even a morning without " clouds; as the tender graſs ſpringing out of " the earth, by clear ſhining after rain." 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

Allegory likewiſe is a figure employed by the Hebrews; and a fine inſtance of this occurs in

the

the lxxxth Pſalm, wherein the people of Iſrael are compared to a vine. Of parables the prophetical writings are full; and if it ſhould be objected to theſe that they are obſcure, it ſhould be remembered, that in old times, in the Eaſtern world, it was univerſally the faſhion to convey truth under myſterious repreſentations.

The figure, however, which elevates beyond all others the poetical ſtyle of the Scriptures, is the proſopopæia, or perſonification. The perſonifications of the Scriptures exceed, in boldneſs and ſublimity, every thing that can be found in other poems. This is more particularly the caſe when any appearance or operation of the Almighty is concerned. "Before him went the "peſtilence—The waters ſaw thee, O God, "and were afraid—The mountains ſaw thee, "and they trembled—The overflowings of the "waters paſſed by—The deep uttered his voice, "and lifted up his hands on high." The poetry of the Scriptures is very different from modern poetry. It is the burſt of inſpiration. Bold ſublimity, and not correct elegance, is its character.

The ſeveral kinds of poetry found in Scripture, are chiefly the didactic, elegiac, paſtoral, and lyric. The book of proverbs is a principal inſtance of the didactic ſpecies of poetry. Of elegiac poetry, there is a very beautiful inſtance in the lamentation of David over Jonathan. Of paſtoral poetry, the Song of Solomon is a high exemplification; and of lyric poetry, the Old Teſtament is full.

With regard to the compoſers of the ſacred Books, it is obvious that there is a ſtrong diverſity in ſtyle and manner. Of the ſacred Poets, the moſt eminent are, the author of the book of Job, David, and Iſaiah. In the compoſitions of David there is a great variety of ſtyle and manner. In the ſoft and tender he excels; and there are many lofty paſſages in his Pſalms. But in ſtrength of deſcription he yields to Job; and in ſublimity he is inferior to Iſaiah. The moſt ſublime of all poets, without exception, is Iſaiah. Dr. Lowth compares Iſaiah to Homer, Jeremiah to Simonides, and Ezekiel to Æſchylus. Among the minor prophets, Hoſea, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and eſpecially Nahum, are eminent for poetical ſpirit. In the prophecies of Daniel and Jonah, there is no poetry.

The book of Job is extremely antient; but the author is uncertain; and it is remarkable, that it has no connection with the affairs or manners of the Jews and Hebrews. The poetry of it is highly descriptive. It abounds in a peculiar glow of fancy, and in metaphor. The author renders visible whatever he treats. The scene is laid in the land of Uz, or Idumæa, which is a part of Arabia; and the imagery employed in it differs from that which is peculiar to the Hebrews.

EPIC

EPIC POETRY.

OF all poetical works, the epic poem is allowed to be the moſt dignified. To contrive a ſtory which is entertaining, important, and inſtructive, to enrich it with happy incidents, to enliven it with deſcriptions and characters, and to maintain a uniform propriety of ſentiment, and a due elevation of ſtyle, are efforts of high genius. An epic poem may be defined to be the recital of ſome illuſtrious enterprize in a poetical form. The epic muſe is of a moral nature; and the tendency of this kind of poetry is the promotion of virtue. To this purpoſe, it acts by extending our ideas of perfection, and by exciting admiration. Now this is accompliſhed by adequate repreſentations of heroic deeds, and virtuous characters. Valour, truth, juſtice, fidelity, friendſhip, piety, magnanimity, are the objects which the epic muſe preſents to our minds, in the moſt ſhining and honourable colours.

Epic compoſition is diſtinguiſhed from hiſtory by its poetical form, and its liberty of fiction. It is a more calm compoſition than tragedy. It requires a grave, equal, and ſupported dignity. On ſome occaſions it demands the pathetic and the violent, and it admits a great compaſs of time and action.

The action or ſubject of the epic muſt poſſeſs three qualifications or properties. It muſt be one; it muſt be great; it muſt be intereſting. One action or enterprize muſt conſtitute its ſubject. Ariſtotle inſiſts on unity as eſſential to the epic; becauſe ſeparate facts never affect ſo deeply, as a tale that is one and connected. Virgil and Homer are careful to uphold the unity of action. Virgil, for example, has choſen for his ſubject the eſtabliſhment of Æneas in Italy; and the anger of Achilles, with its conſequences, is the ſubject of the Iliad.

It is not, however, to be underſtood, that the epic unity, or action, is to exclude epiſodes. On the contrary, the epic poem would be cold without them; and the critics conſider them as its greateſt embelliſhments. They are introduced for the ſake of variety; and they relieve the

reader

reader by ſhifting the ſcene. Thus Hector's viſit to Andromache in the Iliad, and Erminia's adventure with the ſhepherd, in the ſeventh book of the Jeruſalem, afford us a well-judged and pleaſing retreat from camps and buſtles.

The next property of an epic after unity, is, that the action repreſented be great, to a degree that is ſufficient to fix attention, and to juſtify the ſplendour of poetic elevation. Both Lucan and Voltaire have tranſgreſſed this rule. The former does not pleaſe, by confining himſelf too ſtrictly to hiſtorical truth; and the latter has mingled, improperly, well-known events with fictitious parts. Hence they exhibit not that greatneſs which the epic requires.

The third property of the epic is, that it be intereſting. This depends, in a great meaſure, upon the choice of the ſtory. It depends, however, a great deal more upon the artful management of the poet. He muſt frame his plan ſo as to comprehend many affecting incidents. He muſt dazzle with valiant atchievements. He muſt be awful and auguſt; tender and pathetic; gentle and pleaſing.

To render the epic intereſting, great care muſt alſo be employed with reſpect to the characters of the heroes. It is by the management of the characters that the poet is to excite the paſſions, and to hold up the ſuſpenſe and the agitation of his reader.

It is generally ſuppoſed by the critics, that an epic poem ſhould conclude ſucceſsfully; as an unhappy concluſion depreſſes the mind. And, indeed, it is on the proſperous ſide generally that epic poets conclude. But two authors, of great name, are an exception to this practice. Lucan and Milton held the contrary courſe. The one concludes with the ſubverſion of the Roman liberty; and the other with the expulſion of man from Paradiſe.

No preciſe boundaries are fixed for the time, or duration of the epic action. Of the Iliad, the action laſts, according to Boſſu, no longer than forty-ſeven days. The action of the Odyſſey extends to eight years and a half; and that of the Æneid includes about ſix years.

The perſonages in an epic poem ſhould be proper, and well ſupported. They ſhould diſplay the features of human nature; and admit

of

of different degrees of virtue and turpitude. Poetic characters are of two ſorts, general and particular. General characters are ſuch as are wiſe, brave, and virtuous, without any further diſtinction. Particular characters expreſs the ſpecies of wiſdom, of bravery, and of virtue, for which any one is remarkable. In this diſcrimination of characters, Homer excels. Taſſo approaches the neareſt to him in this reſpect: and Virgil is here greatly deficient.

Among epic poets it is the practice to ſelect ſome particular perſonage as the hero. This renders the unity more perfect, and contributes highly to the intereſt and perfection of this ſpecies of writing. It has been aſked, Who then is the hero of Paradiſe Loſt? The devil, ſay a number of critics, who affect to be pleaſant againſt Milton for ſo violent an abſurdity. But their concluſion is falſe. For it is Adam who is Milton's hero; and it is obvious, that he is the moſt capital and intereſting figure in the poem.

In epic poetry, beſide human characters, there are gods and ſupernatural beings. This forms what is called the machinery of the epic; and the French ſuppoſe it eſſential to this ſpecies of

poetry. They conceive, that in every epic the main action ought to be carried on by the intervention of the gods. But there ſeems to be no ſolid reaſon for their opinion. Lucan has no gods, or ſupernatural agents. The author of Leonidas has alſo no machinery.

But if machinery be not abſolutely neceſſary to the epic poem, it ought not to be totally excluded from it. The marvellous has a great charm for the generality of readers. It leads to ſublime deſcription, and fills the imagination. At the ſame time it becomes the poet to be temperate in the uſe of ſupernatural beings; and to employ the religious faith or ſuperſtition of his country, in ſuch a way as to give an air of probability to events that are moſt contrary to the ordinary courſe of nature.

As to allegorical perſonages, ſuch as Fame, Diſcord, Love, and ſuch like, they form the worſt machinery of any. In deſcription they may be allowed; but they ſhould never bear any part in the action of the poem. As they are only mere names of general ideas, they ought not to be conſidered as perſons, and cannot mingle with human actors, without an unſeemly confuſion of ſhadows with realities. As

As to the narration of the epic poem, it is of little conſequence whether it proceeds in the character of the poet, or in the perſon of ſome of the perſonages. It is to be obſerved, however, that if the narrative is given by any of the actors, it affords the poet the advantage of ſpreading out ſuch parts of the ſubject as he inclines to dwell upon in perſon, and of comprehending the reſt within a ſhort recital.

HOMER's ILIAD AND ODYSSEY.

THE father of epic poetry is Homer; and in order to reliſh him, we muſt diveſt ourſelves of the modern ideas of dignity, and tranſport back our imagination almoſt three thouſand years in the hiſtory of mankind. The reader is to expect a picture of the antient world. The two great characters of the Homeric poetry are, fire and ſimplicity. But in order to have a clear idea of his merit, it may be right to conſider the Iliad under the three heads of the ſubject and action, the characters, and the narration.

It is undoubtedly certain, that the ſubject of the Iliad is happily choſen. For no object could be more ſplendid than the Trojan war. A ten years ſiege againſt Troy, and a great confederacy of the Grecian ſtates, muſt have ſpread far the renown of many military exploits, and given an extenſive intereſt to the heroes who were concerned in them. Upon theſe traditions Homer built his poem; and as he lived two or three

centuries

centuries after the Trojan war, he had a full liberty to intermingle fable with hiſtory. He choſe not, however, the whole Trojan war for his ſubject; and in this he was right. He ſelected, with judgment, the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, which includes the moſt intereſting period of the war. He has thus communicated the greater unity to his performance. He gained one hero, or principal character, that is, Achilles; and he ſhows the pernicious effects of diſcord among confederated princes.

The praiſe of high invention has been uniformly beſtowed on Homer. His incidents, his ſpeeches, his characters, divine and human, his battles, his little hiſtory pieces of the perſons ſlain, diſcover a boundleſs imagination. Nor is his judgment leſs worthy of commendation. His ſtory is every where conducted with art. He riſes upon us gradually. He introduces his heroes with exquiſite ſkilfulneſs into our acquaintance. The diſtreſs thickens; and every thing leads to aggrandize Achilles, and to give the moſt complete intereſt to his work.

In his characters, Homer is without a rival He abounds in dialogue and converſation, and this produces a ſpirited exhibition of his perſonages. It muſt at the ſame time be acknowledged, that if this dramatic method is often expreſſive and animated, it takes away occaſionally from the gravity and majeſty of the epic. For example, it may be obſerved, that ſome of the ſpeeches of Homer are unſeaſonable, and others trifling. With the Greek vivacity, he has alſo the Greek loquacity.

Perhaps in no character he diſplays greater art than in that of Helen. Notwithſtanding her frailty and crimes, he contrives to make her intereſting. The admiration with which the old generals behold her when ſhe is coming towards them; her veiling herſelf, and ſhedding tears in the preſence of Priam; her grief at the ſight of Menelaus; her upbraiding of Paris for his cowardice, and her returning fondneſs for him; theſe ſtrokes are exquiſite, and worthy of a great maſter.

It has been reproached to Homer, that he has been unhappy in his portrait of Achilles; and the critics ſeem to have adopted this cenſure, from the following lines of Horace: *Im-*

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
Jura negat ſibi nata ; nihil non arrogat armis.

It appears that Horace was miſtaken, and went beyond the truth. Achilles, no doubt, was paſſionate ; but he was no contemner of laws. He had reaſon on his ſide ; and if he diſcovers heat, it ſhould be allowed that he had been notoriouſly wronged. Beſide bravery and contempt of death, he had alſo the qualities of openneſs and ſincerity. He loved his ſubjects, and reſpected the gods. He was ſtrong in his friendſhips ; and throughout he was high-ſpirited, gallant, and honourable.

Homer's gods make a great figure ; but his machinery was not his own. He followed the traditions of his country. But though his machinery is often lofty and magnificent, it is yet true that his gods are often deficient in dignity. They have all human paſſions ; they drink and feaſt, and are vulnerable like men. While, however, he at times degrades his divinities, he knows how to make them appear with the moſt awful majeſty. Jupiter, for the moſt part, is introduced with great dignity ; and ſeveral ſublime conceptions are founded on the appearances of Neptune, Minerva, and Apollo. As

As to the ſtyle or manner of Homer, it is eaſy, natural, and animated. He reſembles in ſimplicity the poetical parts of the Old Teſtament. Mr. Pope, in his tranſlation of him, affords no idea of his manner. His verſification is allowed to be uncommonly melodious.

With regard to narration, Homer is conciſe and deſcriptive. He paints his objects, in a manner, to our ſight. His battles are admirable. We ſee them in all their hurry, terror, and confuſion. His ſimilies are thrown out in the greateſt abundance; and many of them are extremely beautiful. His compariſons have alſo great merit; but they come upon us in too quick a ſucceſſion. They even ſerve, at times, to diſturb the train of narration. His lions, bulls, eagles, and herds of ſheep, recur too frequently.

Upon the ſubject of the Odyſſey, the criticiſm of Longinus is not without foundation; that in this poem, Homer may be likened to the ſetting ſun, whoſe grandeur remains without the heat of his meridian beams. In vigour and ſublimity, it is inferior to the Iliad. It has, however, great beauties, and is confeſſedly a very amuſing poem. It poſſeſſes much greater variety

than

than the Iliad, and exhibits very pleaſing pictures of antient manners. Inſtead of the ferocity which pervades the Iliad, it preſents us with amiable images of hoſpitality and humanity. It entertains us with many a wonderful adventure, and many a landſcape of nature; and there is a rich vein of morality and virtue running through every part of the poem.

It is not, however, without ſtriking faults. Many of its ſcenes are evidently below the level of the epic poem. The laſt twelve books, after Ulyſſes is landed in Ithaca, are, in many places, tedious and languid; and perhaps the poet is not happy in the diſcovery of Ulyſſes to Penelope. She is too cautious and diſtruſtful; and we meet not that ſurprize of joy which was to have been expected on ſuch an occaſion.

THE

THE ÆNEID OF VIRGIL.

THE Æneid has all the correctneſs and refinement of the Auguſtan age. We meet no contentions of heroes about a female ſlave, no violent ſcoldings, no abuſive language. There reigns through the poem an uniform magnificence.

The ſubject of the Æneid, which is the eſtabliſhment of Æneas in Italy, is extremely happy. Nothing could be more intereſting to the Romans than to look back to their origin from ſo famous a hero. While the object was ſplendid itſelf, the traditionary hiſtory of his country opened intereſting fields to the poet; and he could glance at all the future great exploits of the Romans, in its antient and fabulous ſtate.

As to the unity of action, it is perfectly well preſerved in the Æneid. The ſettlement of Æneas, by the order of the gods, is conſtantly kept in view. The epiſodes are linked properly

with

with the main ſubject. The nodus, or intrigue of the poem, is happily managed. The wrath of Juno, who oppoſes Æneas, gives riſe to all his difficulties, and connects the human with the celeſtial operations throughout the whole poem.

There are great art and judgment in the Æneid; but it is not to be ſuppoſed that Virgil is without his faults. One great imperfection of the Æneid is, that there are almoſt no marked characters in it. Achates, Cloanthes, Gyas, and other Trojan heroes who accompanied Æneas into Italy, are inſipid figures. Even Æneas himſelf is without intereſt. The character of Dido is the beſt ſupported in the whole Æneid.

Perhaps, in the Æneid, the management of the ſubject has ſeveral defects. The ſix laſt books received not the finiſhing hand of the author; and for this reaſon, he ordered his poem to be committed to the flames. The wars with the Latins are unimportant and unintereſting; and the reader is tempted to take part with Turnus againſt Æneas.

The principal excellency of Virgil is tenderneſs. His ſoul was full of ſenſibility. He muſt have felt himſelf all the affecting circumſtances

in

in the ſcenes he deſcribes; and he knew how to touch the heart by a ſingle ſtroke. In an epic poem this merit is the next to ſublimity. The ſecond book of the Æneid is one of the greateſt maſter pieces that ever was executed. The death of old Priam, and the family pieces of Æneas, Anchiſes, and Creuſa are as tender as can be conceived. In the fourth book, the unhappy paſſion and death of Dido are admirable. The epiſodes of Pallas and Evander, of Niſus and Euryalus, of Lauſus and Mezentius, are all ſuperlatively fine.

In his battles, Virgil is far inferior to Homer. But in the important epiſode, the deſcent into hell, he has outdone Homer by many degrees. There is nothing in antiquity to equal the ſixth book of the Æneid. The ſcenery, the objects, the deſcription, are great, ſolemn, and ſublime. With regard to their comparative merit, it muſt be allowed, that Homer was the greater genius, and Virgil the more correct writer. Homer is more original, more bold, more ſublime, and more forcible. In judgment they are both eminent. Homer has all the Greek vivacity. Virgil all the Roman ſtatelineſs. The

ima-

imagination of Homer is moſt copious, that of Virgil the moſt correct. The ſtrength of the former lies in warming the fancy, that of the latter in touching the heart. Homer is more ſimple; Virgil more elegant.

LUCAN's

LUCAN's PHARSALIA.

LUCAN is inferior to Homer and Virgil. He yet deſerves attention. There is little invention in his Pharſalia; and it is conducted in too hiſtorical a manner to be ſtrictly epic. It may be arranged, however, under the epic claſs, as it treats of great and heroic adventures. The ſubject of the Pharſalia has ſufficiently the epic dignity and grandeur; and it poſſeſſes unity of object: for it points to the triumph of Cæſar over the Roman liberty.

But though the ſubject of Lucan is confeſſedly heroic, it is not happy; and a penetrating reader may remark two defects in it. Civil wars preſent ſhocking objects to obſervation, and furniſh melancholy pictures of human nature. Theſe are not fit topics for the heroic muſe. It was the unhappineſs of Lucan's genius to delight in ſavage ſcenes, and to depict the moſt horrid forms of atrocious cruelty.

It is another defect of Lucan's ſubject, that it was too near the times in which he lived. This deprived him of the aſſiſtance he might have derived from fiction and machinery. The facts upon which he founds were too well known, and too recent, to admit of fables, and the interpoſition of gods.

The characters of Lucan are drawn with fire and force. But although Pompey is his hero, he has not been able to make him ſufficiently intereſting. He marks not Pompey by any high diſtinction, either for magnanimity or valour. He is always ſurpaſſed by Cæſar. Cato is a favourite character with him; and he is very careful in making him always appear with an advantageous luſtre.

In managing his ſtory, Lucan confines himſelf too much to chronological order. This breaks the thread of his narration, and hurries him from place to place, He is, at the ſame time, too digreſſive. He indulges prepoſterouſly in geographical deſcriptions, and in philoſophical diſquiſitions.

It muſt, notwithſtanding, be allowed, that there are ſplendid paſſages in the Pharſalia; but

the

the ſtrength of this poet does not lie either in narration or deſcription. His narration is often dry and harſh, and his deſcriptions are often overwrought. His chief merit conſiſts in his ſentiments. They are noble, ſtriking, glowing, and ardent. He is the moſt philoſophical, and the moſt patriotic poet of antient times. He was a Stoick; and the ſpirit of that philoſophy pervades his work. He is elevated and bold; and his feelings were keen and warm.

As his vivacity and fire are great, he is apt to be carried away by them. His great defect is the want of moderation. He never knows how to ſtop. When he would aggrandize his objects, he is unnatural and tumid. There is a great deal of bombaſt in his poem. His taſte is marked with the corruption of his age; and inſtead of poetry, he often exhibits declamation.

On the whole, however, he muſt be allowed the praiſe of livelineſs and originality. His high ſentiments and his fire ſerve to atone for his various defects. His genius had ſtrength, but was without tenderneſs or amœnity.

As to Statius and Silius Italicus, they cannot be refuſed to belong to the epic claſs; but they are too inconſiderable for minute or particular criticiſm.

TASSO's

TASSO's JERUSALEM.

THE *Jeruſalem Delivered* is a ſtrictly regular poem of the epic kind, and abounds with beauties. The ſubject is the recovery of Jeruſalem from the Infidels, by the united powers of Chriſtendom. The enterprize was ſplendid, venerable, and heroic; and an intereſting contraſt is exhibited between the Chriſtians and the Saracens. Religion renders the ſubject auguſt, and opens a field for ſublime deſcription and machinery. The action too lies in a country, and at a period of time ſufficiently remote, to admit the intermixture of fable with hiſtory.

A rich invention is a capital quality in Taſſo. His events are finely diverſified. He never fatigues his reader by ſameneſs or repetition. His ſcenes have an endleſs variety; and from camps and battles, he tranſports us to more pleaſing objects. The work, at the ſame time, is artfully con-

connected; and in the midſt of variety, the author preſerves, perfectly, the unity of his plan.

A great many characters enliven the poem; and theſe are ſupported with a ſtriking propriety. Godfrey is prudent, moderate, and brave; Tancred is amorous and gallant; Rinaldo is paſſionate and reſentful, but full of honour and heroiſm. Solyman is high minded; Erminia is tender; Armida is artful and violent. In the drawing of characters, Taſſo is ſuperior to Virgil, and yields to no poet but Homer.

There is a great deal of machinery in this poet. When celeſtial beings interfere, Taſſo is noble. But devils, enchanters, and conjurers, act too great a part throughout his poem. And, in general, the marvellous is carried to an extravagance, that ſpoils the intereſt of the work. The poet had conceived too great an admiration of the romantic ſpirit of knight errantry.

In deſcribing magnificent objects, the ſtyle of Taſſo is firm and majeſtic. In gay and pleaſing deſcription, it is ſoft and inſinuating. Erminia's paſtoral retreat in the ſeventh book, and the arts and beauty of Armida in the fourth book, are exquiſitely beautiful. His battles are full of fire,

and

and varied in the incidents. It is chiefly by actions, characters, and deſcriptions, that he intereſts us. For he excels not in the ſentimental part of his performance. He is by far inferior to Virgil in tenderneſs; and, in general, when he aims at ſentiment, he is artificial.

It has often been objected to Taſſo, that he abounds in point and conceit; but this is an error. For in his general character he is maſculine. The humour of decrying him has paſſed from the French critics to thoſe of England. But their cenſures are founded either in ignorance or prejudice. For the *Jeruſalem* is the third epic poem in the world; and Taſſo takes his ſtation after Homer and Virgil. He is eminent for the fertility of his invention, the expreſſion of his characters, the richneſs of his deſcription, and the beauty of his ſtyle.

THE LUSIAD OF CAMOENS.

THE Portugueſe boaſt of Camoens, as much as the Italians do of Taſſo. The diſcovery of the Eaſt-Indies by Vaſco de Gama, is the ſubject of the poem of Camoens; and the enterprize is alike ſplendid and intereſting. The adventures, diſtreſſes, and actions of Vaſco, and his countrymen, are well fancied and deſcribed; and the Luſiad is conducted upon the epic plan. The incidents of the poem are magnificent; and if an allowance is made for ſome wildneſs and irregularity, there will be found in it much poetic ſpirit, much fancy, and much bold deſcription. In the poem, however, there is no attempt towards painting characters; and the machinery of the Luſiad is altogether extravagant. There prevails in it an odd mixture of Chriſtian ideas and Pagan mythology. The true deities appear to be Pagan divinities; and what is ſtrange, Chriſt and the holy Virgin are made to be inferior agents. The great purpoſe, notwith-

withſtanding of the Portugueſe expedition, is to extend the empire of Chriſtianity, and to extirpate Mahometaniſm.

In this religious undertaking, the chief protector of the Portugueſe is Venus, and their great adverſary is Bacchus. Jupiter is introduced as foretelling the downfal of Mahomet. Vaſco, during a ſtorm, implores the aid of Chriſt and the Virgin; and, in return to this prayer, Venus appears, and diſcovering the ſtorm to be the work of Bacchus, complains to Jupiter, and procures the winds to be huſhed. All this is moſt prepoſterous; but towards the end the poet makes an apology for his mythology. His apology, however, is not ſatisfactory. For his ſalvo is, that the goddeſs Thetis informs Vaſco, that ſhe and the other heathen divinities are nothing more than names to deſcribe the operations of providence.

In the Luſiad, notwithſtanding, there is ſome fine machinery of a different kind. The appearance of the genius of the river Ganges, in a dream to Emanuel, King of Portugal, inviting him to diſcover its ſecret ſprings, and acquainting him that he was deſtined to enjoy the trea-

ſures of the Eaſt, is a fine idea. But it is in the fifth canto that the poet diſplays his nobleſt conception of this ſort. Vaſco is there recounting the wonders of his navigation. And when the fleet arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, which never had been doubled before by any navigator, he relates, that there appeared to them ſuddenly a huge phantom, riſing out of the ſea in the midſt of tempeſts and thunder, with a head that advanced to the ſkies, and a countenance the moſt terrific. This was the genius of that hitherto unknown ocean; and he menaced them, in a voice of thunder, not to invade thoſe undiſturbed ſeas, and foretelling the calamities that were to befal them, retired from their view. This is a very ſolemn and ſtriking piece of machinery.

THE

THE TELEMACHUS OF FENELON.

IT would be unpardonable in a review of epic poets, to forget the amiable Fenelon. His work, though in proſe, is a poem; and the plan, in general, is well contrived, having epic grandeur, and unity of action. He employs the ancient mythology; and excels in its application. There is great richneſs, as well as beauty, in his deſcriptions. To ſoft and calm ſcenes his genius is more peculiarly ſuited. He delights in painting the incidents of paſtoral life, the pleaſures of virtue, and the proſperity and tranquillity of peace.

His firſt ſix books are eminently excellent. The adventures of Calypſo are the chief beauty of his work. Vivacity and intereſt join in the narration. In the books which follow, there is leſs happineſs in the execution, and an apparent languor. The author, in warlike adventures, is moſt unfortunate.

Some critics have refuſed to rank *The Telemachus* among epic poems. This delicacy ariſes from the minute details it exhibits of virtuous policy, and from the diſcourſes of Mentor, which recur too frequently, and in which there is doubtleſs too much of a common-place morality. To theſe peculiarities, however, the author was lead from the deſign with which he wrote, of forming a young prince to the cares and duties of a virtuous monarch.

Several poets of the epic claſs, have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by deſcribing a deſcent into hell; and in all of them there is a diverſity. It is even curious to obſerve, that from examining the notions they convey of an inviſible world, we may perceive, with eaſe, the improvements which the progreſs of refinement had gradually produced in the opinions of men, with regard to a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. In Homer, the deſcent of Ulyſſes into hell is indiſtinct and dreary. The ſcene is in the country of the Cimmerians, who inhabit a region covered with clouds and darkneſs; and when the dead appear, we hardly know whether Ulyſſes is

above

above or below ground. The ghoſts too, even of the heroes, appear to be ſad and diſſatisfied.

In Virgil, the deſcent into hell diſcovers greater refinement, and indicates a higher advancement in philoſophy. The objects are diſtinct, awful, and grand. There is a fine diſcrimination of the ſeparate manſions of the good and the bad ſpirits. Fenelon, in his turn, improves upon Virgil. The viſit of Telemachus to the ſhades is in a higher ſtyle of philoſophy. He refines the antient philoſophy by his knowledge of the true religion, and that beautiful enthuſiaſm for which he is ſo remarkabie. His relation of the happineſs of the juſt, is an admirable effort in the myſtic ſtrain.

THE HENRIADE OF VOLTAIRE.

THE Henriade is, without doubt, a regular epic poem. To deny genius to Voltaire would be abſurd; and in the preſent work, accordingly, he diſcovers, in ſeveral places, that boldneſs of conception, that vivacity, and that livelineſs of expreſſion, for which he has been ſo much diſtinguiſhed. A few of his compariſons are new, and remarkably happy. But, perhaps, the Henriade is not the maſter-piece of this writer. In the tragic line, he has certainly been more ſucceſsful than in the epic. It may be obſerved too, that French verſification is by no means ſuited to epic compoſition. Its want of elevation is againſt it, as well as its being fettered with rhyme. There is thence not only a feebleneſs in the Henriade, but even a proſaic flatneſs. The poem, of conſequence, languiſhes; and the imagination of the reader is not animated with any of that ſpirit and intereſt, which ought to be inſpired by a ſublime and ſpirited performance of the epic kind.

The

The triumph of Henry IV. over the arms of the League, is the ſubject of the Henriade. But the action of the poem includes, properly, only the ſiege of Paris. It is ſufficiently epic; and the poem, in general, is conducted according to the critical rules. But it has great defects. It is founded on civil wars; and it preſents to the mind the odious objects of aſſaſſinations. The period which it contains is alſo too recent, and too much within the circle of well-known incidents. The author has farther erred, by mixing fiction improperly with truth. For example, he makes Henry IV. to travel into England, and to hold an interview with Queen Elizabeth. Now Henry never ſaw England, and never converſed with Elizabeth; and ſuch unnatural and ill ſorted fables are ſo wild, that they ſhock every intelligent reader.

A great deal of machinery is employed by Voltaire, for the purpoſe of embelliſhing his poem. But it is remarkable, that his machinery is of the worſt kind. It conſiſts of allegorical beings. Diſcord, Cunning, and Love, are with him perſonages and actors. This is againſt rational criticiſm. It is poſſible to go along with

the belief of ghoſts, angels, and devils; but it ſhould be conſidered, that allegorical beings are nothing better than repreſentations of human paſſions and diſpoſitions; and they ought not to have a place as actors in any poem.

It is, notwithſtanding, to be remarked, to the honour of Voltaire, that the machinery of Saint Louis, which he alſo employs, is poſſeſſed of a real dignity. The proſpect of the inviſible world, which St Louis gives to Henry in a dream, is a very fine paſſage in the Henriade. The introduction, by Death, of the ſouls of the dead in ſucceſſion before God, and the palace of the Deſtinies, are alſo paſſages which are ſtriking and magnificent.

Notwithſtanding the epiſodes of Voltaire, his narration is by far too general. At the ſame time, the events are too much crowded together. The ſtrain of ſentiment, however, which pervades the Henriade, is noble. Religion appears always with the greateſt luſtre; and the poem has that ſpirit of humanity and toleration, which is the conſtant diſtinction of men, who riſe far above the level of the ſpecies.

MIL-

MILTON's PARADISE LOST.

MILTON runs a new and very extraordinary career. In Paradiſe Loſt, he introduces his reader, at once, into an inviſible world, and ſurrounds him with celeſtial and infernal beings. Angels and devils are not his machinery, but his actors. As the natural courſe of his events is marvellous, doubts may ariſe, whether his poem be ſtrictly an epic compoſition. But whether it be ſo or not, it is certainly a high effort of poetical genius; and in majeſty and ſublimity, is equal to any performance of antient or modern times.

The ſubject of his poem led Milton into difficult ground. If his matter had been more human, and leſs theological; if his occurrences had been connected with real life; and if he had afforded a greater diſplay of the characters and paſſions of men, his poem, to the generality of readers, would have been more alluring. His

ſubject, however, was certainly ſuited, in a peculiar manner, to the daring ſublimity of his genius. As he alone, perhaps, was fitted for his ſubject, ſo he has ſhown, in the conduct of it, a wonderful ſtretch of imagination and invention. From a few hints afforded by the ſacred Scriptures, he has ſtupendouſly raiſed a regular ſtructure, and filled his poem with a variety of incidents. No doubt, he is at times dry and harſh; and too often the metaphyſician and the divine. But in the general flow of his narration, he is engaging, elevated, and affecting. His objects are changed with art; his ſcene is now in heaven, and now on earth; and amidſt this variety he ſupports the unity of his plan. Still and calm ſcenes are exhibited in the employments of Adam and Eve when in Paradiſe; and there are buſy ſcenes, and great actions, in the enterprizes of Satan, and the wars of the Angels. The amiable innocence of our Firſt Parents, and the proud ambition of Satan, afford a contraſt throughout the whole poem, which gives it an uncommon charm. But perhaps the concluſion is too tragic for epic compoſition.

In the Paradiſe Loſt there is no great diſplay of

of characters ; but the perſonages which appear are properly ſupported. Satan is a figure particularly ſtriking ; and Milton has artfully given him a mixed character, not altogether void of ſome good qualities. He is brave ; and to his own troops he is faithful. He is impious, but not without remorſe. He even feels a ſentiment of compaſſion for our Firſt Parents, and appeals to the neceſſity of his ſituation, as an apology for his machinations againſt them. His malice is not full and unbounden ; and while he is reſentful, he is ambitious. The characters of Beelzebub, Moloch, and Belial, are well painted. The good angels, though dignified, have too much uniformity. They have their diſtinctions, however ; and it is impoſſible not to remark, the mild condeſcenſion of Raphael, and the tried fidelity of Abdiel. The attempt of the poet to deſcribe God Almighty himſelf, was too bold, and accordingly is unſucceſsful. Our Firſt Parents are finely pourtrayed. Yet, perhaps, Adam is repreſented as too knowing and refined for his ſituation. Eve is hit off more happily. Her gentleneſs, modeſty, and frailty, are expreſſively characteriſtic of the female character.

The

The great ſtrength of Milton conſiſts in ſublimity. Here, perhaps, he is ſuperior to every poet. But it is to be obſerved, that his ſublimity is of a peculiar ſort. It differs from that of Homer, which is always accompanied with impetuoſity and fire. The ſublime of Milton is a calm and amazing grandeur. Homer warms us and hurries us along. By Milton we are fixed in a ſtate of elevation and aſtoniſhment. The ſublime of the former is to be found, moſt commonly, in his deſcription of actions; that of the latter, in the repreſentation of ſtupendous and wonderful objects.

But while Milton muſt be allowed to be highly ſublime, it is likewiſe true, that his work abounds in the beautiful, the pleaſing, and the tender. When the ſcene is in Paradiſe, the imagery is gay and ſmiling. His deſcriptions mark a fertile imagination; and his ſimiles have uncommon happineſs. His faults, for what writer is without them, refer chiefly to his learned alluſions, and to antient fables. It muſt alſo be confeſſed, that there is a falling off in the latter part of Paradiſe Loſt.

The

The language and verſification of Milton have high merit. His blank verſe is harmonious and diverſified; and his ſtyle has great force and majeſty. There may be found, indeed, proſaic lines in his poem. But theſe are eaſily pardoned in a long work, where the poetry is in general, ſo ſmooth, ſo varied, and ſo flowing.

In the Paradiſe Loſt, amidſt beauties of every kind, it is not ſurpriſing to meet inequaliti es. No high genius was ever uniformly correct. Theology and metaphyſic, appear too abundantly in Milton; his words are often technical: and he is too affectedly oſtentatious of his learning. Theſe faults are a great blemiſh to his work; but in extenuation of them, it is to be obſerved, that they are to be imputed to the pedantry of his age.

DRA-

DRAMATIC POETRY.

TRAGEDY.

IN all civilized nations, dramatic poetry has been a favourite amuſement; and it divides itſelf into the two forms of Tragedy and Comedy. Of the two, tragedy is the moſt dignified; as great and ſerious objects intereſt more than little and ludicrous ones. The one has a reference to the paſſions, the virtues, the crimes, and the ſufferings of mankind; the other reſts on their humours, follies, and pleaſures. Of the latter the inſtrument is ridicule.

Tragedy is a direct imitation of human manners and actions. It does not exhibit characters by deſcription or narration: it ſets the perſonages before us, and makes them act and ſpeak with propriety. This ſpecies of writing requires, of conſequence, a deep knowledge of the human heart; and when happily executed, it has a commanding power in raiſing the ſtrongeſt emotions.

In

In its ſtrain and ſpirit, tragedy is favourable to the promotion of virtue. It is chiefly by exciting virtuous emotions that it operates. Characters of honour claim our reſpect and approbation; and to raiſe indignation, we muſt paint a perſon in the odious colours of depravity and vice. Virtuous men, indeed, are often repreſented by the tragic poet as unfortunate; for this happens in nature: but he never fails to engage our hearts in their behalf; and, in the end, he conducts them to triumph and proſperity. Upon the ſame principle, if bad men are repreſented as ſucceſsful, they are yet finally conducted to puniſhment. It may, therefore, be concluded, that tragedies are moral compoſitions; and that pious men have often prepoſterouſly exclaimed againſt them.

It is affirmed by Ariſtotle, that the deſign of tragedy is to purge our paſſions by the means of pity and terror. But perhaps it would have been more accurate to have ſaid, that the object of this ſpecies of compoſition is to improve our virtuous ſenſibility; and if a writer excites our pity for the afflicted, inſpires us with becoming ſentiments on beholding the viciſſitudes of life,

and

and ſtimulates us to avoid the misfortune of others by exhibiting their errors, he has attained all the moral purpoſes of the tragic muſe.

In the compoſition of a tragedy, it is neceſſary to have an intereſting ſtory upon which to build; and in the conduct of the piece, nature and probability are chiefly to be conſulted. For the end of tragedy is not ſo much to elevate the imagination, as to affect the heart. This principle, which is founded in the cleareſt reaſon, excludes from tragedy all machinery, and all fabulous interventions whatſoever. Ghoſts alone, from their foundation in popular belief, have maintained their place upon the ſtage; but the uſe of them is not to be commended, and muſt be managed with great art.

To ſupport the impreſſion of probability, the ſtory of a tragedy, according to ſome critics, ſhould never be a pure fiction, but ought to be built on real hiſtory. This, however, is ſurely carrying the matter too far. For a fictitious tale, if properly conducted, will melt the heart as much as any real hiſtory. It is ſufficient that nature and probability are not wounded; and thus it is not objected to the tragic poet, that he

mixes

mixes many a fictitious circumſtance with real and well-known facts. The great majority of readers, never think of ſeparating the hiſtorical from the fabulous. They are only attentive to, and couched by, the events that reſemble nature. Accordingly, the moſt affecting tragedies are entirely fictitious in their ſubject. Such are the Zaire and Alzire of Voltaire, the Fair Penitent, and Douglas.

In its origin, tragedy was very rude and imperfect. Among the Greeks, it was firſt nothing more than the ſong which was ſung at the feſtival of Bacchus. Theſe ſongs were ſometimes ſung by the whole company, and ſometimes by ſeparate bands, anſwering alternately to each other, and making a chorus. To give this entertainment the greater variety, Theſpis, who flouriſhed above five hundred years before the Chriſtian æra, contrived, that between the ſongs there ſhould be a recitation in verſe; and Æſchylus, who lived fifty years after him, introduced a dialogue between two perſons, or actors, comprehending ſome intereſting ſtory, and placed them upon a ſtage adorned with ſcenery. The drama began now to have a regu-

lar

lar form; and was ſoon after brought to perfection by Sophocles and Euripides.

It thus appears, that the chorus was the foundation of tragedy. But what is remarkable, the dramatic dialogue, which was only an addition to it, grew to be the principal part of the entertainment. The chorus loſing its dignity, came to be accounted only an acceſſory in tragedy. At length, in modern tragedy, it diſappeared altogether; and its abſence from the ſtage, in modern times, is the chief diſtinction between our drama and that of the antients.

With regard to the chorus, it muſt be allowed, that it gave a ſplendour to the ſtage; and that it was a vehicle for moral leſſons, and high poetic flights. But, on the other hand, it was unnatural, and took away from the intereſt of the piece. It removed the repreſentation from the reſemblance of life. It has, accordingly, been excluded, with propriety, from the ſtage.

In the conduct of a drama, the unities of action, place, and time, have been conſidered as very capital circumſtances, and it is proper to treat of them.

The

The unity of action is undoubtedly very important. It refers to the relation which all the incidents introduced bear to ſome deſign or effect, ſo as to combine them naturally into a whole or totality. This unity of ſubject is expreſsly eſſential to tragedy. For a multiplicity of plots, by diſtracting the attention, prevent the paſſions from riſing to any height. Hence the abſurdity of two independent actions in the ſame play. There may, indeed, be under-plots; but the poet ſhould be careful to make theſe ſubſervient to the main action It is the buſineſs of theſe to contribute to the bringing forward the cataſtrophe of the play.

Of the defect of a ſeparate and independent intrigue, which has no connexion with the real object of the piece, there is a clear example in the Cato of Addiſon. Cato is, no doubt, a noble perſonage, and the author ſupports his character with ſucceſs. But all the love-ſcenes in the play have no connexion with the principal action. The paſſion of Cato's ſons for Lucia, and of Juba for Cato's daughter, are merely epiſodiacal. They break the unity of the ſubject; and join, moſt unſeaſonably, the fopperies

of

of gallantry, with high ſentiments of patriotiſm and public virtue.

The unity of action muſt not, however, be confounded with the ſimplicity of the plot. The plot is ſimple, when a ſmall number of incidents are introduced into it. With reſpect to plots, the antients were more ſimple than the moderns. The Greek tragedies appear, indeed, to be even too naked, and deſtitute of intereſting events. The moderns admit of a greater extent of incidents; and this variety is certainly an improvement, as it renders the entertainment not only more inſtructive, but more animated. It may, however, be carried too far; for an overcharge of action and intrigue, produce perplexity and embarraſſment. Of this the Mourning Bride of Congreve is an example. Its events are too many, and too rapidly exhibited. The buſineſs of the play is too complex; and the cataſtrophe is intricate and artificial.

But it is not only in the general conſtruction of the fable, that the unity of action is to be attended to. It muſt be ſtudied in all the acts and ſcenes of the play. By an arbitrary diviſion, there are five acts in every play. This is founded on the authority of Horace, *Neve*

Neve minor, neu ſit quinto productior actu
Fabula.

There is nothing, however, in nature or reaſon for this rule. On the Greek ſtage, the diviſion by acts was unknown. The word act never occurs once in the Poetics of Ariſtotle. Practice, however, has eſtabliſhed this diviſion; and it will not be eaſily overthrown.

A clear expoſition of the ſubject ſhould appear in the firſt act. It ſhould introduce the perſonages to the acquaintance of the ſpectator, and ſhould excite curioſity. During the ſecond, third, and fourth acts, the plot ſhould advance and thicken. The paſſions ſhould be kept perpetually awake. There ſhould be no ſcenes of idle converſation, or vain declamation. The ſuſpenſe and agitation of the ſpectator ſhould be excited more and more. Such is the great excellency of Shakſpeare. Sentiment and paſſion, pity and terror, ſhould reign and pervade every tragedy.

In the fifth act, which is the ſeat of the cataſtrophe, the author ſhould diſplay his fulleſt art and genius. The unravelling of the plot ſhould be brought about by natural and probable means.

It

It ſhould be ſimple, depend on a few events, and include a few perſons. A paſſionate ſenſibility languiſhes, when divided among a number of objects. It is only ſtrong and vehement when directed to a few. In the cataſtrophe, every thing ſhould be warm and glowing; and the poet ſhould be ſimple, ſerious, and pathetic.

To the cataſtrophe of a tragedy, it is not neceſſary that it ſhould terminate uufortunately. It is ſufficient, that diſtreſs, agitation, and tender emotions are raiſed, in the courſe of the play. Accordingly, Voltaire's fineſt tragedies have a happy concluſion. But with regard to the ſpirit of Engliſh tragedy, it leans more to the other ſide.

It is curious to enquire, how it ſhould happen that the emotions of ſorrow in tragedy ſhould afford a pleaſing gratification to the mind. It ſeems to be the conſtitution of our nature, that all the ſocial paſſions ſhould be attended with pleaſure. Hence there is nothing more agreeable than love and friendſhip. Pity, for wiſe ends, is appointed to be a ſtrong inſtinct; and it is an affection which is neceſſarily accompanied with ſome diſtreſs, on account of the

ſym-

ſympathy with the ſufferers which it involves. The heart, at the ſame moment, is warmed with kindneſs, and afflicted with diſtreſs. Yet, upon the whole, the condition or ſtate of the mind is agreeable. We are pleaſed with ourſelves, not only for our benevolence, but for our ſenſibility. Hence the foundation of the charm of tragedy. The pleaſure of tragedy is alſo heightened, by the recollection that the diſtreſs is not real; and by the power of action and ſentiment, poetry and language.

After treating of the acts of a play, it is proper to attend to the ſcenes. The entrance of a new perſon upon the ſtage conſtitutes what is called a new ſcene. Theſe ſcenes, or ſucceſſive converſations, ſhould be connected cloſely together; and a great deal of the art of dramatic compoſition conſiſts in the management of them. There are, upon this ſubject, two rules which deſerve conſideration. 1. During the courſe of one act, the ſtage ſhould never be left empty for one moment; for this would make a gap in the repreſentation; and whenever the ſtage is evacuated, the act is cloſed. This rule is uniformly preſerved by the French poets; but it has been

much neglected by the Engliſh tragedians. 2. The other rule is, that no perſon ſhould come upon the ſtage, or leave it, without a reaſon appearing for the one and the other. If this rule is neglected, the dramatis perſonæ are little better than ſo many puppets; and the nature of dramatic writing is contradicted and wounded. For the drama profeſſes an imitation of real tranſactions.

To the unity of action, the critics have added the unities of time and place. It is required, by the unity of place, that the ſcene ſhould never be ſhifted; but that the action of the play ſhould continue in the ſame place where it had begun. It is required, by the unity of time, that the time of the action be no longer than the time that is allowed for the repreſentation of the play. Ariſtotle, however, is not ſo ſevere in this particular, and permits the action to comprehend the whole time of one day. Theſe rules are intended to bring the imitation as cloſe as poſſible to reality.

Among the Greeks, there was no diviſion of acts. In modern times, the practice has prevailed of ſuſpending the ſpectacle for ſome little

time

time between the acts. This practice gives a latitude to the imagination, and renders the ſtrict confinement to time and place leſs neceſſary. Upon this account, therefore, too ſtrict an adherence to theſe unities ſhould not be preferred to high beauties of execution, nor to the introduction of pathetic ſcenes. But tranſgreſſions of theſe unities, though they may be often advantageous, ought not to be too wild and violent. The hurrying the ſpectator from one diſtant city to another, and the making ſeveral weeks and months paſs during the repreſentation, would ſhock the imagination too much, and could not be reliſhed.

Having examined dramatic action, it is now fit to attend to the characters moſt proper to be exhibited in tragedy. Many critics affirm, that the nature of tragedy demands, that the principal perſonages ſhould be conſtantly of illuſtrious character, and of high or princely ranks. For they affirm, that the ſufferings of ſuch perſons ſeize the heart the moſt forcibly. But this is but a ſpecious way of reaſoning. For the diſtreſſes and agitations of private life are affecting in a high degree. Deſdemona, Monimia, and Belvi-

dera, intereſt us as much as if they had been Queens or Princeſſes. It is ſufficient, that in tragedy there be nothing degrading or mean in the perſonages exhibited. Illuſtrious rank may give greater ſplendour to the ſpectacle; but it is the tale itſelf, and the art of the poet, that alone can give its full influence to the piece.

In deſcribing the characters of the perſons repreſented, the poet ſhould be careful ſo to order the incidents which relate to them, as to impreſs the ſpectators with favourable ideas of virtue, and the adminiſtration of providence. Pity ſhould be raiſed for the virtuous in diſtreſs; and the author ſhould ſtudiouſly beware of making ſuch exhibitions of life, as would render virtue an object of averſion.

Perfect unmixed characters, either of good or ill men, are not, in the opinion of Ariſtotle, the fitteſt for tragedy. For the diſtreſſes of the former, as unmerited, hurt us; and the afflictions of the latter excite no compaſſion. Mixed characters, like thoſe we meet with in the world, are the beſt field for diſplaying, without any bad conſequence to morals, the viciſſitudes of life. They intereſt us the moſt deeply; and while all

their

their diſtreſſes are pathetic, they are the more inſtructive, when their misfortunes are repreſented as ſpringing out of their own paſſions, or as originating in ſome weakneſs incident to human nature.

The Greek tragedies are too often founded on mere deſtiny, and inevitable misfortunes. Modern tragedy aims at a higher object, and takes a wider range; as it ſhows the direful effects o ambition, jealouſy, love, reſentment, and every ſtrong emotion. But of all the paſſions which have engaged the modern ſtage, love has had the greateſt triumph. To the antient theatre, love, was, in a manner, unknown. This proceeded from the national manners of the Greeks, which encouraged a greater ſeparation of the ſexes, than takes place in modern times. Neither did female actors appear upon the antient ſtage; a circumſtance which operated againſt the introduction of love ſtories. It is clear, however, that no ſolid reaſon can be aſſigned for the predominancy of love upon the ſtage; and it is, doubtleſs, moſt improper, that the limits of tragedy ſhould be confined. Racine in the Athalie, Voltaire in the Merope, and Home in Douglas, have af-

forded ſufficient proofs, that the drama, without any aſſiſtance from love, may produce the higheſt effects upon the mind.

Beſide the arrangement of his ſubject, and the conduct of his perſonages, the tragic poet muſt attend to the propriety of his ſentiments. Theſe muſt correſpond with the perſons who are repreſented, and with the ſituations in which they are placed. This rule is ſo obvious, that it requires not to be inſiſted upon; and it is chiefly in the pathetic parts, that the difficulty of following it is the greateſt. We go to a tragedy in order to be moved and agitated; and if the poet cannot reach the heart, he can have no tragic merit; and we muſt leave his play not only with coldneſs, but under an uneaſy diſappointment.

To paint and to excite paſſion are the prerogatives of genius. They require not only high ſenſibility, but the art of entering deeply into ſituations and characters. It is here that the candidates for the drama are the leaſt ſucceſsful. A man under high paſſion, makes known his feelings in the glowing language of ſenſibility. He does not coolly deſcribe what his feelings

are;

are; yet it is to this ſort of deſcription that tragic poets have recourſe, when they are unable to attain the native language of paſſion. Thus it is even in Addiſon's Cato, when Lucia having confeſſed to Portius her love for him, ſwears that ſhe will never marry him: for Portius, inſtead of giving way to the language of grief and aſtoniſhment, deſcribes only his feelings.

> Fix'd in aſtoniſhment, I gaze upon thee,
> Like one juſt blaſted by a ſtroke from heav'n,
> Who pants for breath, and ſtiffens yet alive
> In dreadful looks; a monument of wrath.

Theſe lines might have proceeded from a byſtander, or an indifferent perſon, but are altogether improper in the mouth of Portius. Similar to this deſcriptive language, are the unnatural and forced thoughts which tragic poets ſometimes employ to exaggerate the feelings of perſons, whom they wiſh to deſcribe under high agitation. Thus when Jane Shore, in meeting with her huſband in her diſtreſs, and on finding that he had forgiven her, calls on the rains to give her their drops, and to the ſprings to lend her their ſtreams, that ſhe may poſſeſs a conſtant

ſupply of tears, the poet ſtrains his fancy, and ſpurs up his genius to be abſurd.

The language of real paſſion is always plain and ſimple. It abounds, indeed, in figures; but theſe expreſs a diſturbed and impetuous ſtate of mind, and are not for mere parade and embelliſhment. The thoughts ſuggeſted by paſſion are natural and obvious, and not exaggerations of refinement, ſubtilty, and wit. Paſſion neither reaſons, nor ſpeculates, nor declaims. The language is ſhort, broken, and interrupted. The French tragedians deal too much in refinement and declamations. The Greek tragedians adhere moſt to nature. They are natural and pathetic. This too is the great excellency of Shakſpeare. He exhibits the true language of nature and paſſion.

As to moral ſentiments and reflexions, they ought not to recur too frequently in tragedy. When unſeaſonably uſed, they loſe their effect, and convey an air of pedantry. When introduced with propriety, they have an alluring dignity. Cardinal Wolſey's ſoliloquy on his fall, is a fine inſtance of the felicity with which they may be employed. There is alſo a high

moral

moral turn of thought, in many places of Addiſon's Cato.

The ſtyle and verſification of tragedy ſhould be free, eaſy, and various; and the Engliſh blank verſe appears to be peculiarly ſuited to this ſpecies of compoſition. It is capable of great majeſty, and may yet deſcend to the familiar: it admits of a happy variety of cadence, and is free from the monotony of rhyme. Of the French tragedies, it is a great misfortune that they are conſtantly in rhyme. For it fetters the freedom of the tragic dialogue, debaſes it with languor, and is fatal to the power of paſſion.

As to the ſplendid compariſons in vogue, and to the ſtrings of couplets with which it was, ſome time ago, the faſhion to conclude the acts of a tragedy, and even the more intereſting ſcenes, they are now laid aſide; and they are to be regarded not only as childiſh ornaments, but as diſguſting barbariſms.

GREEK TRAGEDY.

WE have formerly obſerved, that in the Greek tragedy there was much ſimplicity. The plot was natural and unencumbered; the incidents few; and the conduct very exact, with reſpect to the unities of action, time, and place. Machinery and the intervention of the gods were employed; and what was prepoſterous, the final unravelling was not unfrequently made to turn upon them. Love, if one or two inſtances are excepted, was never admitted into the tragedy of the Greeks. A vein of morality and religion is made to run through it; but they employed leſs than the moderns, the combat of the paſſions. For their plots they were indebted to the ancient hereditary ſtories of their own nation.

Æſchylus, who is the father of the Greek tragedy, exhibits both the beauties and defects of an early original writer. He has boldneſs and animation, but is often difficult and obſcure.

His

His ſtyle is highly metaphorical, and often tumid and harſh. His ideas are martial; and he poſſeſſes more force than tenderneſs. He alſo delights in the marvellous.

The moſt maſterly of the Greek tragedians is Sophocles. He is the moſt correct in the management of his ſubjects, and the moſt juſt and ſublime in his ſentiments. In deſcriptive talents he is alſo eminent. Euripides is accounted more tender than Sophocles; and in moral ſentiments he is more abundant. But he is leſs careful in the conduct of his plays; his expoſitions of his ſubjects are leſs artful; and the ſongs of his chorus, though finely poetic, are leſs connected with the principal action. Both of them, however, have high merit as tragic poets. Their ſtyle is beautiful; and their ſentiments, for the moſt part, juſt. They ſpeak with the tones of nature; and though ſimple, they are touching and intereſting.

The theatrical repreſentation on the ſtages of Greece and Rome, was, in many reſpects, very ſingular, and widely different from that of modern times. The ſongs of the chorus were accompanied with inſtrumental muſic; and the

dialogue part had a modulation of its own, and might be ſet to notes. It has alſo been thought, that ſometimes, on the Roman ſtage, the pronouncing and geſticulating parts were divided, and performed by different actors. In tragedy, the actors wore a long robe; they were raiſed upon cothurni, and played in maſks. Theſe maſks were painted; and the actor, by turning the different profiles, exhibited different emotions to the auditors; a contrivance this, which was ſurely very imperfect. In the dramatic ſpectacles, notwithſtanding, of Greece and Rome, the attention given to their exhibition and magnificence, far exceeded the attempts of modern ages.

FRENCH

FRENCH TRAGEDY.

TRAGEDY has appeared with great luſtre in France; and the principal dramatic writers of this nation are, Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. It muſt be acknowledged, that they have improved upon antiquity; and are more intereſting than the old tragedians, from their exhibition of more incidents, greater variety of paſſions, and the fuller diſplay of characters. Like the antients, they excel in regularity of conduct; and their ſtyle is poetical and elegant. But, perhaps, to an Engliſh taſte they want ſtrength and paſſion, and are too declamatory, and too refined. They ſeem afraid of being too tragic; and it was the opinion of Voltaire, that there is neceſſary to the perfection of tragedy, the union of the Engliſh vehemence and action, with the correctneſs and decorum of the French theatre.

Cor-

Corneille, who raiſed to eminence the French tragedy, unites majeſty of ſentiment, and a fruitful imagination. His genius was rich, but had rather a turn to the epic than the tragic. He is magnificent and ſplendid, rather than touching and tender. He is too full of declamation, and often too extravagant. His productions are numerous; and the moſt celebrated of his dramas are the Cinna, the Cid, Horace, and Polyeucte.

In the tragic line, Racine is ſuperior to Corneille. He poſſeſſes not, indeed, the copiouſneſs of Corneille, bus he is free from his bombaſt, and is remarkable for tenderneſs. His Phædra, his Athalie, and his Mithidrate, are a great honour to the French ſtage. The beauty of his language and verſification is uncommon; and he has managed his rhymes with a ſuperior advantage. Voltaire has repeatedly obſerved, that the Athalie of Racine is the "Chef d'Oeuvre" of the French theatre. It is a ſacred drama, and owes much to the majeſty of religion. Perhaps, however, it is leſs intereſting than the Andromaque. He is alſo infinitely fortunate in his Phædra.

Vol-

Voltaire is not inferior to his predeceſſors in the drama; and there is one circumſtance in which he has far outdone them. This is in the delicacy and intereſt of his ſituations. Here he is peculiarly great. Like his predeceſſors, however, he is ſometimes deficient in force, and ſometimes too declamatory. His characters, notwithſtanding, are depicted with ſpirit, his events ſtrike, and his ſentiments abound in animation. Zaire, Merope, Alzire, and the Orphan of China, are moſt excellent tragedies.

ENGLISH

ENGLISH TRAGEDY.

IT has often been remarked of tragedy in Great Britain, that it is more ardent than that of France, but more irregular and incorrect. It therefore has excelled in what is the ſoul of tragedy. For the paſſionate and the pathetic muſt be allowed to be the chief excellence of the tragic muſe.

Shakſpeare is the firſt of all the Engliſh dramatiſts. In extent and force of genius, he is unrivalled. But at the ſame time it muſt be owned, that his genius is ſometimes wild, that his taſte is not always chaſte, and that he was too little aſſiſted by art and knowledge. Criticiſm has been laviſhed with the utmoſt prodigality in commentaries upon him; yet it is undecided, whether his beauties or defects are the greateſt. There are in his writings ſcenes that are admirable, and paſſages that are ſuperlatively touching; but there is not one of his plays which

can

can be pronounced to be a good one. His irregularities are extreme, his mixtures of the ſerious and the comic are groteſque, and he has often a diſguſting play of words, harſh expreſſions, and a certain obſcure bombaſt. Theſe faults are, however, extenuated or redeemed by two of the greateſt perfections that a tragic poet can diſplay, by lively and diverſified paintings of character, and by ſtrong and happy expreſſions of paſſion. Upon theſe pillars his merit reſts. In the midſt of his abſurdities he intereſts and moves us; ſo great is his ſkill in human nature, and ſo lively his repreſentations of it.

He has another high advantage. He has created for himſelf a world of preternatural beings. His witches and ghoſts, fairies and ſpirits, are ſo awful, myſterious and peculiar, that they ſtrongly affect the imagination. Of the dramas of this ſingular writer, the greateſt are his Othello and Macbeth. With regard to his hiſtorical plays, they are not tragedies or comedies, but a ſpecies of dramatic entertainment, in which he deſcribes the perſonages, the events, and the manners of the times of which he treats.

After

After Shakſpeare there are few dramatic writers, whoſe whole works are entitled to high praiſe. There are ſeveral tragedies, however, which have great value. Lee's Theodoſius has warmth and tenderneſs, but is ſomewhat romantic in the plan, and extravagant in the ſentiments. Otway is excellent in the Orphan and Venice Preſerved. Perhaps, however, he is too tragic in theſe pieces. He had genius and ſtrong paſſions, but is diſpoſed to be too indelicate.

The tragedies of Rowe abound in morality, and in elevated ſentiments. His poetry is good, and his language is elegant. He is, notwithſtanding, cold, and leſs tragic than flowery. His beſt dramas are Jane Shore and the Fair Penitent, which excel in the tender and pathetic.

In the Revenge of Dr. Young, there are fire and genius; but it is deficient in tenderneſs, and exhibit too ſtrong a conflict of direful paſſions. In the Mourning Bride of Congreve, there are fine ſituations, and a great flow of poetry. The tragedies of Mr. Thomſon are dull and formal, from too inordinate an intermixture of ſtiff morality. His Tancred and Sigiſmunda is by far his beſt piece.

A Greek

A Greek tragedy may be denominated a ſimple relation of an intereſting incident. A French tragedy is a ſucceſſion of refined converſations. In an Engliſh tragedy, vehemence predominates; and it may be deſcribed to be a repreſentation of the combat of ſtrong paſſions.

CO-

COMEDY.

THE ſtrain and ſcope of comedy diſcriminate it ſufficiently from tragedy. The greater paſſions are the province of the latter; and the inſtrument of the former is ridicule. Follies and vices, and whatever in the human character is the object of cenſure and impropriety, are the objects of the comic muſe. It is a ſatirical exhibition, and includes an idea that is uſeful and moral. It is commendable, by this ſpecies of compoſition, to correct and to puniſh the manners of men. There are many vices which are more ſucceſſively exploded by ridicule, than by ſerious argumentation. It is poſſible, however, to employ ridicule improperly; and by its operation to do miſchief inſtead of good. For it is not right to conſider it as the proper teſt of truth; and licentious writers of the comic ſort, may caſt a ridicule on objects which are not deſerving of it. But this is not the fault of comedy, but of the turn and genius

of certain individuals. In the management of looſe men, comedy may corrupt; but in that of well-intentioned writers, it is a gay entertainment, and may lead to reformation, and the advancement of virtue.

The rules of dramatic action, that are preſcribed for tragedy, belong alſo to comedy. The comic writer muſt alſo obſerve the unities of action, time, and place. It is ever requiſite to attend to nature and probability. The imitation of manners ought even to be more exact in comedy than in tragedy. For the ſubjects of comedy are more familiar, and better known.

The ſubjects of tragedy are confined to no age or country; but it is otherwiſe in comedy. For the decorums of behaviour, and the nice diſcriminations of character, which are the objects of comedy, are not to be underſtood, but by the natives of the country where the author reſides. We may weep for the heroes of Greece and Rome, but we can only be touched with the ridicule of the manners and characters that come under our own obſervation. The ſcene, therefore, of comedy, ſhould conſtantly be laid in the author's own country, and in his own age.

age. The comic poet catches the manners living as they riſe.

It is, indeed, true, that Plautus and Terence did not adopt this rule. The ſcene of their comedies is laid in Greece, and they adopted the Greek laws and cuſtoms. It is to be conſidered, however, that comedy was, in their age, a new entertainment; and that they were contented with the praiſe of being tranſlators from Menander, and other comic writers of Greece. In poſterior times, too, the Romans had the "Co-"mœdia Togata," or what was eſtabliſhed on their own manners, as well as the "Cœmedia "Palliata," which was founded on thoſe of the Greeks.

There are two kinds of comedy, that of character and that of intrigue. In the laſt, the plot of the play is the principal object. In the firſt, the diſplay of a peculiar character is the chief point; and to this the action is ſubordinate. It is in comedies of character that the French abound moſt. Such are the capital pieces of Moliere; the Avare, Miſanthrope, and Tartuffe. It is to comedies of intrigue that the Engliſh have leaned moſt. Such are the plays of

Con-

Congreve; and, in general, there are more ſtory and action on the Engliſh, than on the French theatre.

The perfection of comedy is, perhaps, to be found in the mixture of theſe two kinds of entertainments. A mere converſation, without an intereſting ſtory, is inſipid. There ſhould ever be ſo much of intrigue, as to give a foundation for wiſhes and fears. The incidents ſhould be ſtriking, and in nature; and ſhould afford a full field for the exhibition of character. The piece, however, ſhould not be overcharged with intrigue. For this would be to convert a comedy into a novel.

With reſpect to characters, it is a common error of comic writers, to carry them much beyond real life; and, indeed, it is very difficult to hit the preciſe point, where wit ends, and buffoonery commences. The comedian muſt exaggerate; but good ſenſe muſt teach him where to ſet bounds to his ſatire and ridicule. Plautus, for inſtance, is extravagant, when his Miſer, after examining the right and the left hands of the perſon whom he ſuſpects of having purloined his caſket, cries out, "*oſtende etiam "tertiam.*"

There

There ought, in comedy, to be a clear diſtinction in characters. The contraſt of characters, however, by their introduction in pairs, and by oppoſites, is too theatrical and affected. It is the perfection of art to conceal art. The maſterly diſcrimination of characters is, by the uſe of ſuch ſhades of diverſity as are commonly found in ſociety; and it is obvious, that ſtrong oppoſitions are ſeldom brought into actual contraſt in any of the circumſtances of life.

As to the ſtyle of comedy, it ought to be elegant, lively, and pure; and ſhould generally imitate the tone of polite converſation. It ſhould not deſcend into groſs expreſſions. Rhyme is not ſuitable to comic compoſition. For what has poetry to do with the converſations of men in common life? The flow of the dialogue ſhould be eaſy without pertneſs, and genteel without flippancy. The wit ſhould never be ſtudied or unſeaſonable.

AN-

ANTIENT COMEDY.

THE comedy of the antients was an avowed ſatire againſt particular perſons, who were brought upon the ſtage by name. Such were the plays of Ariſtophanes; and compoſitions of ſo ſingular a nature illuſtrate well the turbulent licentiouſneſs of Athens. The moſt illuſtrious perſonages, generals and magiſtrates, were then expoſed to the unreſtrained ſcope of the comic muſe. Vivacity, ſatire, and buffoonery, are the characteriſtics of Ariſtophanes. His ſtrength and genius are not to be doubted; but his performances do not ſurely afford any high idea of the attic taſte of wit in his age. His ridicule is puſhed to extremity; his wit is farcical; his perſonal raillery is cruel and biting; and his obſcenity is intolerable.

After the age of Ariſtophanes, the laws prohibited the liberty of attacking perſons by name on the ſtage. The middle comedy took its riſe. Living characters were ſtill aſſailed, but under

fictitious names. Of theſe pieces there are no remains. They were ſucceeded by the new comedy. It was then, as it is now, the buſineſs of the ſtage, to exhibit manners and characters, but not thoſe of particular men. The author, the moſt celebrated of this kind among the Greeks was Menander; but his writings have periſhed.

Of the new comedy of the antients, the only examples which exiſt are the plays of Plautus and Terence. The firſt is eminent for the *vis comica*, and for an expreſſive phraſeology. He bears, however, many marks of the rudeneſs of the dramatic art in his time. He has too much low wit and ſcurrility; and is by far too quaint, and too full of conceit. He has variety, notwithſtanding, and force; and his characters are well marked, though ſomewhat coarſe. Dryden and Moliere have done him the honour to imitate him.

Terence is poliſhed, delicate, and elegant. Nothing can be more pure and graceful than his latinity. Correctneſs and decency reign in his dialogue; and his relations have a pictureſque and beautiful ſimplicity. The morality he inculcates

culcates cannot be objected to; his ſituations are intereſting; and many of his ſentiments find their way to the heart. He may be conſidered as the founder of the ſerious comedy. In ſprightlineſs and in ſtrength he is deficient. There is a ſameneſs and uniformity in his characters and plots; and he is ſaid to have been inferior to Menander, whom he copied.

SPANISH COMEDY.

THE earlieſt object in modern comedy is the Spaniſh theatre. The chief comedians of Spain are Lopez de Vega, Guillin, and Calderon. The firſt, who is the moſt famous of them, was the author of not leſs than a thouſand plays; and was infinitely more irregular than our Shakſpeare. He diſregarded, altogether, the three unities, and every eſtabliſhed rule of dramatic compoſition. In one play he is not afraid to include whole years, and even the life of a man. His ſcene in one act is in Spain; in another in Italy; and in a third in Africa. His dramas are chiefly hiſtorical; and are a mixture of heroic ſpeeches, ſerious incidents, war, ridicule, and buffoonery. He jumbles together chriſtianity, paganiſm, virtues, vices, angels, and gods. Notwithſtanding his faults, he was in poſſeſſion of genius, and of great force of imagination. Many of his characters are well painted; many of his ſituations are happy;

and

and from the ſource of his rich invention, the dramatic writers of other nations have drawn many advantages. He was conſcious himſelf of his extreme irregularities, and apologized for them, from the want of taſte of his countrymen.

FRENCH COMEDY.

THE comic theatre of France is allowed to be correct, chaſte, and decent. Regnard, Dufreſny, Dancourt, and Marieux, are comic writers of conſiderable merit. But the author of this claſs, in whom the French glory moſt, is Moliere. According to the judgement of the French critics, he has nearly reached the ſummit of perfection in his art. Nor, perhaps, is their deciſion fallacious. Moliere is the ſatiriſt only of vice and folly. His characters were peculiar to his own times; and, in general, his ridicule is exact. His comic powers were very great; and there is an innocence in his pleaſan-

try. His Miſanthrope and Tartuffe are in verſe, and conſtitute a kind of dignified comedy, in a ſtyle politely ſatirical. In his proſe comedies there is a profuſion of ridicule; but the poet never gives the alarm to modeſty, or is deſirous to caſt a contempt againſt virtue. Theſe are great perfections; but it is to be allowed that they are mingled with conſiderable defects. The unravelling of his plots is by no means happy. In this he is often improbable, and without preparation. Perhaps his attention to the full exhibition of characters, took away from his care of the conduct of the intrigue. In his verſe comedies, he does not always afford a complete intereſt; and his ſpeeches run not unfrequently into prolixity. In his pieces in proſe he is often too farcical. But, upon the whole, it may be affirmed, that few writers ever attained ſo perfectly the true end of comedy. With regard to grave comedy, it is underſtood that his Tartuffe is his chief production; and with reſpect to gay comedy, the preference has been given to his Avare.

ENG.

ENGLISH COMEDY.

THE Engliſh comic theatre excites high expectations. A variety of original characters, and bold ſtrokes of wit and humour, belong to it. It has been pronounced, that humour is, in ſome degree, peculiar to England. The freedom of our government, and the unreſtrained liberty of manners which prevail, tend to the production of ſingularity. In France, the influence of a deſpotic court ſpreads a uniformity over the nation. Comedy, accordingly, has a freer vein in England than in France. But it is to be regretted, that the comic ſpirit of Britain is too often diſgraced by indecency and licentiouſneſs.

It is remarkable, however, that the firſt age of Engliſh comedy was free from this ſpirit. Shakſpeare and Ben Jonſon have no immoral tendency in their plays. The comedies of the former have a high invention, but are irregular in their conduct. They are ſingularly rich in characters and manners; but they deſcend too often to pleaſe the mob. Jonſon is more regular,

but

but more pedantic. He yet was poſſeſſed of dramatic genius. There are much fancy, and many fine paſſages, in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. But, in general, they are deformed with romantic improbabilities, with unnatural characters, and with coarſe alluſions.

The changes which have taken place in manners, have rendered the old comedies rather obſelete. For it is the exhibition of prevailing characters and modes, that gives its charm to comedy. Thus Plautus was antiquated to the Romans in the days of Auguſtus. But to the great honour of Shakſpeare, it is obſervable, that his Falſtaff is ſtill admired, and that his Merry Wives of Windſor may yet be read with real pleaſure.

After the reſtoration of Charles II. the licentiouſneſs which polluted the court and the nation ſeized upon comedy. The rake became the predominant character. A ridicule was thrown upon chaſtity and ſobriety. Indeed, in the end of the piece, the rake becomes a ſober man; but throughout the performance he was a fine gentleman, and exhibits a picture of the pleaſurable enjoyment of life. This ſpirit of co-

medy

comedy had the worſt effects in forming the youth of both ſexes; and it continued down to the days of George II.

In the comedies of Dryden there are many ſtrokes of genius; but he is frequently haſty and careleſs. As his object was to pleaſe, he followed the current of the times, and gave into a vein of corruption and licentiouſneſs. His want of decency was, at times, ſo groſs, as to occaſion the prohibition of his pieces.

After Dryden, flouriſhed Cibber, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, and Congreve. Cibber has ſprightlineſs, and a pert vivacity; but is forced and unnatural in his incidents. His performances have all ſunk into obſcurity, excepting The Careleſs Huſband and The Provoked Huſband. Of theſe, the firſt is remarkable for the eaſy politeneſs of the dialogue; and it is tolerably moral in its conduct. The latter, in which Cibber was aſſiſted by Vanbrugh, is perhaps the beſt comedy in the Engliſh language. It may yet be objected to it, that it has a double plot. Its characters, however, are natural, and it abounds with fine painting, and happy ſtrokes of humour.

Wit,

Wit, ſpirit, and eaſe, characterize Sir John Vanbrugh ; but he is the moſt indelicate and immoral of all our comedians. Congreve poſſeſſed, undoubtedly, a happy genius. He is witty and ſparkling, and attentive to character and action. Indeed, it may be ſaid, that he overflows with wit. It is often introduced without propriety ; and, in general, it is too pointed and apparent for well-bred converſation. Farquhar is a light and gay writer ; leſs correct than Congreve, and leſs brilliant ; but more eaſy, and nearer to real life. Like Congreve too, he is foully licentious ; and modeſty muſt turn from them with abhorrence. The French boaſt, with juſtice, of the ſuperior decency of their ſtage, and ſpeak of the Engliſh theatre with aſtoniſhment. Their philoſophical writers have even aſcribed the profligate manners of London, to the indelicacy and corruption of the Engliſh comedy.

Of late years, a reformation has gradually taken place in Engliſh comedy. Our writers of comedy now appear aſhamed of the indecency of their predeceſſors. They may be inferior to Farquhar and Congreve in ſpirit, eaſe, and wit; but

but virtue has gained ſomething by their being by far more innocent and moral.

It is to the French ſtage that we are indebted for this improvement. The introduction there of a graver comedy, of what has been called La Comedie Larmoyante, has attracted the attention and the approbation of our writers. This invention is not altogether a modern one. For the Andria of Terence is of this deſcription. Gaiety and ridicule are not excluded from this graver comedy; but it ſeeks to merit praiſe by tender and intereſting ſituations. It is ſentimental, and touches the heart. It pleaſes not ſo much by the laughter it excites, as by the tears of affection which it draws forth.

This form of comedy has been oppoſed in France as an unjuſtifiable innovation. Its not being founded on laughter and ridicule, has been objected to it with harſhneſs. For it does not follow, that all comedies ſhould be formed on one preciſe model. Some may be light, and ſome may be ſerious; and others may partake of both theſe deſcriptions. It is ſufficient, that human life and manners are deſcribed with preciſion and knowledge. It is not to be ſuppoſed,

that

that this new ſpecies of comedy is to ſuperſede, altogether, the comedy that is founded in ridicule. There are materials for both; and the ſtage is the richer for the innovation. At any rate it may be conſidered as a mark of true politeneſs, and refinement of manners, that theatrical exhibitions ſhould become faſhionable, which are free from indelicate ſentiment, and an immoral tendency,

THE END.